

I-91 Interchange 19 Study Northampton, MA

Comments Submitted the Project Website through July 2, 2010

1. Hello and thank you for taking my comments: As a resident of Hadley, I have long looked forward to improvements to the Damon Road/Rt 9/Interstate 91 interchange. For a number of years, the bridge and Rte 9 improvements had a significant impact on the town of Hadley and its residents, along with the commuters passing through the Rte 9 corridor. Many folks consider this a Northampton issue as the land is located there. But a large portion of the traffic is backs up on the Hadley side of the equation, and results it in delays and traffic going west to Northampton or points beyond. In my opinion, concerns are focused the delays heading westbound on Rte 9; the backups on Damon Road; and the backup of the off ramp on exit 19 NB on during peak traffic periods. With emphasis on the substantial investment the state has already made in on this corridor by revamping and expanding the bridge and the Rte 9 corridor in Hadley to 2 lanes from the center of town to the Damon Rd intersection; it has effectively added additional "parking capacity" to the westbound traffic on Rte 9. Figuratively, the pipe's diameter has increased so it can hold more volume. But regardless of the pipe's diameter, there remains the "valve" in the form of the Rte 9/Damon Rd intersection, restricting the flow every time the light turns red. The way I see it, the only way to alleviate the backups is to remove the valve at the end of the pipe and allow traffic to get on interstate 91 S without stopping; and by adding a NB entrance to Rt91. So from a concept standpoint, I like the taking on the problem of the traffic from Rte 9 West to 91S as addressed either in concept 13B or the single fly over ramp in concept 16. But add an NB entrance to 91N from Damon Road as shown in concept 15A to either of these options. This would allow both the major backups on Rte9 to be self clearing and unobstructed. ,,I appreciate the information on this site and look forward to progress on this issue in the future. Again I thank you for your consideration. Regards

2. I have just reviewed the literature made available on the proposals for interchange19 and would like to make a couple of comments. ,When I first looked at proposals for this site, I was tuned into the #15 concept and didn't think much of that primarily because of the proposal to have the NB on and off ramps coming off of Damon Rd. Damon Rd. does not need more bottle necks such as a cross-over to access I-91 north bound. If a NB on ramp is an answer to the back-up coming off the bridge, et. al, onto Damon Rd(depending upon the flow studies), an off ramp could be built to go directly to I-91 north either with a fly-over or a ramp further west off Damon Rd. before the Damon Rd. overpass. Also, depending upon the % of traffic coming into Damon Rd. from the Bridge Rd. intersection headed for 91 south, a flyover to I-91 south could be built off of Damon Rd just east of the mini-mall. They both would eliminate traffic at the King St intersection as well as the 19 intersection at a lower cost than, the flyovers at the bridge. Most of the traffic coming into Damon Rd./19 during the

AM traffic comes from that King St. intersection. Eliminating some of that traffic flow before the 19 intersection would improve flow there substantially, especially the I-91 SB travelers. I'm also hung up on the need for a NB on-ramp from the 19 intersection. Is there enough traffic coming off the bridge heading for I-91 NB to make the flyover or the NB on-ramp at Damon Rd cost effective? My instincts say no. The traffic off the bridge(WB)and the flow of traffic coming from the King St intersection (EB) both have to be the main concerns to make any project at 19 worth spending that kind of money on. Thanks for listening. Once I get a better feel for all proposals, you might hear from me again.

3. Most of the alternatives present are overkill for the issues. There are only two significant issues, 1) Damon Road needs to be widened, at least at the Kings Street intersection and 2) at times there are too many cars west bound on Rte 9, turning left onto I-91 south. Concept 13 will resolve the second issue, at the least cost. Use the money saved to widen Damon road, at least from the railroad bridge to the King Street Intersection. All other concepts spend a lot of money to fix issues that are not significant problems.
4. I strongly favor the "No Build" option for this project. Please invest the money, instead, in infrastructure for bicycles and pedestrians, as well as mass transit.
5. I am the current chair of the Amherst Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee. I attended last night's presentation and would like to make a few comments. I totally support the TDM, but would like to see it also include car pooling and a park and ride lots in Amherst and Hadley. There are a number of vacant parcels on University Drive in Amherst that would be ideal for such use. I believe any design should first consider how it encourages alternative transportation options. Although I am not convinced that anything needs to be done to this interchange, I would find design concept options 12, 13, 13a and 13 be acceptable, provided that pedestrian and bicycle safety and convenience are included in the design. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
6. I have examined the alternatives for changes to the area at Exit 19. I have some comments: Concepts 15, 15A, 16 and 17 have impossibly negative impacts on the community and the environment and should be out of the question. Concept 18 is overkill and ridiculously expensive. I don't think that either bicycle or pedestrian accommodations are of great importance - there ARE no pedestrians to speak of, and there is a fine bike path already in place. UMASS is the big problem - make them limit vehicle use on campus. Do nothing' gets my vote.
7. This whole exercise is a blatant disregard for all that FHWA stands for in terms of transparent transportation delivery. There are at least 20 and probably more exit ramps in the greater Boston metro area [and beyond] that have worse traffic tie-ups because of insufficient capacity. The only reason why this one is being fast tracked is because Cong. Olver sits on the Transp. subcommittee in Congress. There is no really need to do anything here. Though I'd admit times are slow for consultants and this is a pretty good bone to throw their way. Too bad you are wasting this on a firm from mid-America. They don't deserve it.

8. Hello, I'd like to express my concern about the result of this project. Pretty much whatever plan is chosen, it is going to encourage an increase of traffic. I think you need to be aware that many people currently choose other forms of transportation due to the fact that there is traffic congestion and back-ups. If changes to the area are made that help carry more traffic, more people are going to choose to get back into their cars and now we will not only be back in the same situation in a matter of years, but have wasted money on a project that could better be spent elsewhere. Not only that, but we then add more automobile emissions to the air and damage the environment. I am a great example of the above. I commute via bicycle at least three times a week- 15 miles each way. My main motivation is that I am fed up with the traffic. But a second, important motivation is reducing emissions. I hope that the project can allocate as much design and money to improving the alternate methods of transportation for the area. This would include widening and improving the Norwottuck Rail Trail so it attracts more users. Currently many bikers won't use it because of the broken pavement, roots, and glass surface. Also, I would like to see a continual sidewalk from downtown Northampton to Downtown Amherst. Route 9 is dangerous and not pedestrian friendly, and that is why many people use cars. How about an extension of the bus service- perhaps a shuttle that runs all day- more frequently than the bus- that goes between downtowns? Perhaps this could be nearly a free service. I fear that adding rotaries (traffic circles, roundabouts) will not only increase confusion and crashes, but will also slow traffic down, take away the charm of the neighborhoods, and waste more fuel with traffic waiting. I just don't see the need to encourage more traffic flow. I hope these comments were helpful and hope they are taken into consideration. Thank you.
9. Energy-producing windmills in the rotaries/alongside the road please.
10. Please do not go ahead with the reconstruction of the I91 on/off ramps. This would mean the loss of homes and valuable farmland. Please consider the alternatives to promote alternative forms of transportation. Thank You
11. I am strongly opposed to the expensive and unneeded Exit 19 expansion. I believe that this would only increase the amount of traffic coming off the highway, causing further congestion on Rte. 9 and in Northampton and Hadley. Our planning should be going in the direction of greener mass transit options, not increased auto traffic.
12. I would prefer that NO money be spent on the interchange, and that the money be used instead to improve bus service, and bicycle infrastructure (bike/ped paths, bike lockers, etc). This could include the smart traffic lights mentioned in, the proposal which decrease bus trip length. If, some development HAS to occur, then I would like, it to be as minimal and inexpensive as possible. For example, Option 13 with the roundabouts is supposed to improve the bike commuting experience, according to the proposal, thus this could be a positive way to spend money.

13. Please do NOT go ahead with this project. The costs outweigh the benefits hugely. Direct all moneys toward a more pressing need.
14. I am opposed to spending any money to change exit 19. The delays there are minor and not a cause for public spending. If people want a shorter commute, they can carpool. We must become less reliant on cars, roads, and fossil fuels if we are to halt the threat of disastrous climate change. We should be investing in bike paths, public transportation, and other non-car options for our future.
15. PLEASE DON'T SPEND MILLIONS ON THIS- IT ISN'T NECESSARY. Take the money and improve public transportation- buses, light rail, parking lots for the ability to take public transportation, etc. This isn't necessary!!!!
16. Please reconsider the idea of altering Exit 19 from Route 91. As someone who frequently travels in this area, I have to say that it seems a waste of money and resources. I would rather see the money and the human power used for a faster shoring-up of the many Massachusetts bridges on the waiting list. Thank you,
17. At its June 17th meeting, the Norwottuck Rail Trail Advisory Committee voted unanimously to submit the following comments regarding the Interchange 19 proposals: We believe it is imperative that any recommended proposal preserves the integrity of the Norwottuck Rail Trail, both during construction and into the future. The Trail must stay completely open and operational during construction of the interchange, and the result must not significantly alter the Trail or its environs. Specifically, alterations such as grade changes, tunnels under roadways or bridges over the Trail should be avoided. The Committee strongly supports the TDM option, especially those aspects which will enhance the use of the Trail for year-round transportation. The guarantee of funding for snow-removal equipment and the continuing operational expenses of removing snow from the Trail is crucial. In addition, we encourage the incorporation of multi-modal features like bike/park-and-ride facilities and ride-sharing into the TDM proposal. Thank you for the opportunity to comment,
18. I'm all for better traffic flow on Rt.9 in Hadley and especially for a better I-91 interchange #19. However, I do not see how any of the interchange proposals will do much good. The opportunity for a sensible I-91 access from the U-Mass/Amherst area was lost fifty years ago when the growth of U-Mass began and I-91 was planned. Now, with all the growth in the valley, I believe we're stuck with that interchange #19 pretty much the way it is. People talk of public transportation and bicycle alternatives, but how will that help motorists needing to access the Interstate?
19. Dear Mr. Lang and the Interchange 19 Project Team, Thank you for making the different Exit 19 plans available for review and for providing the opportunity for public comment. It is my strong opinion that the Project Team adopt the "TDM Concept" as the choice for mitigating traffic congestion at Exit 19. More frequent, affordable bus service and priority signals to speed bus service will

make public transit more attractive to 5-College students, local residents and teens wanting access to Amherst -Hadley - Northampton businesses. Improved, safe access to the bike trail, and an improved surface for the Norwottuck Rail trail, will also increase non-vehicular traffic. The other build-out options present unjust hardship on residents living near Exit 19. The quality of life of people living near Exit 19 will diminish during the construction of the project, as well as afterward by increased traffic and future maintenance and upkeep of the new roadways. Their property values will diminish. The Hampshire Gazette has documented the hardship of an Easthampton family near the I-91 bridge construction over the Oxbow, located south of Exit 18, for example. Over the years, I have witnessed the diminished quality of homes along Route 9 in Hadley through widening of roads and increased traffic, noise and pollution. I would not wish the same hardship on my Northampton neighbors. The benefit of an extra few minutes on a car commute to Hadley does not outweigh the negative impacts of increased traffic on the community and the CT River floodplain. We have had almost a year with the new Home Depot and Lowes in Hadley without noticeable congestion resulting at Exit 19. I would prefer my tax dollars support projects that improve public transit and bicycle commuters. Choices that help us diminish dependence on oil must take top priority. Thank you for your attention and time reviewing the public comments on this project. I was pleased to see the "TDM Concept" presented as a viable option for Exit 19, and I believe it is the best choice for the Northampton community. Sincerely,

20. Thank you for your thorough study of options for Exit 19 and clear explanation of them at the public hearing the other night. I happen to think that the well placed and timed traffic light installed recently has taken care of the problem. I commend you for it. Stop spending any further dollars on studies. We must stop spending any more dollars to accommodate more cars. It has been made clear in our world that we need fewer cars, fewer co2 emissions and in fact fewer roads. All transportation dollars from here forward should be invested in our sustainable future which precludes more cars. We need to stop thinking in the same old ways and realize that life will be different from now on. Take those dollars and invest them in excellent public transportation...plentiful, efficient, well advertised, clean, friendly public transportation. More bus routes, express bus lane, light rail, rail service. This is our way into the future that shall be sustainable.
21. The whole idea of the interchange at exit 19 strikes me as another example of fantasy based regional planning. Clearly there will NOT be an increase in traffic in the coming years. It's over folks. Even before the blow out in the Gulf such radical lefties as the US Military Joint Chiefs of Staff had acknowledged peak oil and coming fuel shortages. Preserve what's left of the landscape, finance more public transportation. Don't get prepare for 1965 happy motoring unless you've got a time machine. Besides, having driven that interchange for years, I can't see how it would help congestion very much.
22. Please reconsider investing in building bigger roads and larger intersections to accommodate more individual cars and trucks. What Northampton needs is to

invest this money in public transport options that will help reduce the volume of vehicle traffic. The money should be invested in improving train service and bus service serving Northampton. Thank you

23. I strongly, support fewer cars and better public transportation.
24. I work on Bridge Street and prefer the No Build option and the transportation demand management proposals to enhance public transit. Please do not make the area any less human-scale than it already is. Bring back the trolley.
25. I support a low-impact plan, such as the transportation demand management concept, recognizing that this may require attitude shifts on the public's part that will not happen immediately. Given this, I support Concept 12 as a distant second choice. As a member of the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition (MassBike), a daily cycle commuter, and someone who does not own a car, I agree with the speakers at public forums who maintain that we must expand public transportation and options for cyclists and pedestrians, rather than pouring millions of dollars into expanding infrastructure for vehicles. Is it possible to use Mass DOT money to expand regional planning, rather than simply stand passively by and watch the town of Hadley expand its tax base by inviting more chain retailers to build big-box stores? Can state and local funds be put toward expanding bus routes and hours? Is it possible to educate drivers so that the accident rate at this intersection is reduced?
26. I am concerned that an attempt to increase the capacity of the exit 19 interchange will result in increased traffic and development in the area, thus leading to increased congestion and encouraging an unsustainable automobile-oriented culture. I am also concerned about the financial and environmental costs of such a project.
27. I am writing to ask that no changes be made to Exit 19. Instead of spending millions of dollars to make room for more cars, we need to invest in making alternative forms of transportation more accessible (e.g., bikelanes). I do NOT support ANY changes to Exit 19. We can find a better way to make our infrastructure work for all of us.
28. I strongly support using available funds to strengthen public transportation and bicycle routes. Research shows that traffic grows to fill available roads; building more highways, etc. will not reduce congestion. I therefore do not support adding a new exit from I-91 in Northampton. Thank you.
29. I strongly urge that the money go towards the TDM option. Better public transit and bike/pedestrian access is and must be the way of the future. When gas reaches \$8-10 / gallon (or more) auto traffic will lessen because most people will not pay these prices. Think about climate change and congestion. Please do not make driving easier. It will only bring more cars into the area that is already feeling the effects of congestion.

30. I strongly urge that the money go towards the TDM option. Better public transit and bike/pedestrian access is and must be the way of the future. When gas reaches \$8-10 / gallon (or more) auto traffic will lessen because most people will not pay these prices. Think about climate change and congestion. Please do not make driving easier. It will only bring more cars into an the area that is already feeling the effects of congestion.
31. My concerns are disruption to the natural environment and people's homes. I would like to see the plan with the least amount of impact - the traffic on the ramp is only bad a few times a year with graduations and big concerts. The real hang up is Damon Road around 5:00. What can we do to solve that without tearing too much up?
32. I strongly oppose the Exit 19 interchange project. It is based on thinking from twenty years ago that has long since proven unworkable. We cannot pave any more land, and we cannot kid ourselves that highway development solves traffic problems. If we build it, more traffic will be attracted to this area. I am a local! I don't want this project here! This money should go to supporting mass transportation, bike paths, and local agriculture.
33. I wish to comment on the I-91 Interchange. Before I retired, I worked in North Amherst & live in Northampton. I traveled to work in the middle of the day, and back home in the late afternoon. Yes, there was traffic, but nothing so terrible as to merit neither the enormous amount of money nor the disruption of a whole new interchange. I like the sound of the "Transportation Demand" option. Bus travel locally should be made easier. TRAIN TRANSPORTATION CAN CERTAINLY BE IMPROVED, ESPECIALLY EAST AND WEST -- I see no discussion of this, and that it is hard to understand. My son lives in New York City, and I always take Amtrak to visit him, and that goes well. Using the train to go to Boston or to go west is not so easy, however. Most of all, I support "No Build".

Emailed Comments to Project Team (through July 2, 2010)

1. In my opinion, I believe, the issues that need to be dealt with are as follows, 1] eliminate the need for cars traveling north/south on RT9 to traverse entire length of Damon Rd to go north on 91, 2] move cars coming across Coolidge bridge [RT9 south] onto 91 south expeditiously, 3] allow cars traveling 91 north to reach RT9 north/south without having to traverse Damon Rd. There may be other issues but I see these as paramount and should have been addressed when 91 was 1st constructed. MA planners seem to be short on foresight. I think concept 16 would solve #2 and 15A [or15] #1 & #3, if combined. I realize that cost is one factor to be considered but it would be nice to make it the best possible this time around. Thanks for the web site.
2. After reading and learning of the study underway to finally construct a real interchange, I want to fully endorse and promote option 15. As a local Northampton resident (who until recently lived on Damon Road), allow me to say that anything less than a full interchange is going to simply perpetuate the problem of additional traffic congestion on Damon Road and Bridge Street. Please do not listen to the Webster's and other selfish nimbyists who are not being community minded and want the project scuttled due to their greed. I suggest a city wide referendum at the next election to get a truly balanced picture of the issue from the entire community. Keep up the good work! Progress will not be stifled by those who fail to value preparing for the future.
3. Thank you all for your preparation and care that was so evident in the meeting. I appreciate thoughtful and concerned professionals and volunteers. I jotted down a number of questions and comments, not all of which could be voiced during the meeting.

It seems clear that there is a desire to do *something* about congestion and safety in the exit 19 area. I wonder if that's become a given, or if the "no construction" option is really still on the table. I would like to make the distinction between "do nothing" and "no construction," which can include transportation demand management (TDM) measures and perhaps other programs and policy that would address projected growth by "growing" alternatives at the same rate.

Paul _____'s presentation on alternative transportation ended on an unfortunate note, that being the conclusion that TDM measures would not significantly mitigate congestion at the site under study. It would be natural to then assume that these measures are not worth taking, but I ask planners to look beyond a single dimension of criteria for the benefits of these measures. Fostering and improving alternatives to single occupant automobile traffic can be particularly effective as congestion worsens, as this is what causes many people to finally consider lifestyle changes. It addresses global warming and local pollution concerns. It strengthens community ties as people interact and coordinate their schedules to ride together. It promotes fitness and well-being as more people use human powered transport means. Reduced auto traffic means less noise, less litter, less visual pollution, and makes for a more pleasant

and safer pedestrian neighborhood. A commitment to reduced auto traffic must include a departure from the think-in-a-box approach that merely anticipates and meets the demands of drivers.

Spending \$2-40 million to save 5 minutes commute time for drivers, when public transportation takes 2-3 times as long is spending on the wrong priority.

When a study focuses on the inadequacy of North or South on/off ramps at a given site, I start thinking of north and south traffic and wonder why there is no mention of addressing the abysmal public transport available from Springfield to Greenfield. Not a word. Again, let us seek to reduce traffic, or at least its increase, before we reflexively increase carrying capacity for more cars. 1% per year seems a modest goal for us to set for auto traffic *reduction*, given the environmental, military, political and financial costs of continued oil consumption. Given Maureen _____'s projection for a 1%/yr increase, this modest goal could result in no growth in traffic at all. I couldn't support increasing capacity without at least trying to halt the growth of auto use.

I don't want to pretend that if we run a bus from Northampton to Springfield that many people will take it unless they can get where they need to go once they get to Springfield. Surprise, this is not a cheap thing to address. Thus we need to look, region-wide, at all proposed road construction projects and balance their utility, *region-wide*, against spending similar resources on public transport or other TDM measures. Again, it may appear, at first glance, that short term return is cheapest achieved in the way we're used to acting: expanding our roads. Again, I ask that we look at the many collateral benefits of reducing traffic, some of which were mentioned, above.

Since neither exit 10 or exit 20 is complete with all four ramps (on and off, north and south), they really should be treated as one exit that is split over the distance. For instance, adding those absurd flying ramps to "complete" exit 19 would be entirely unnecessary if Damon Road were expanded to four lanes. I'm not suggesting this, but it seems at least as viable as three tiers of roadway, which are as out of place in Northampton as the Connecticut River would be in Los Angeles. The Damon Rd/King Street intersection is scheduled for improvement, but it's unclear what that will be. I didn't hear evidence that designers were interested in treating these exits as an integrated whole. While I understand the ugliness of an "incomplete" exit, I don't yet see why it's necessary for good traffic flow, only that it's offensive to all notions of good design. I agree that it's initial design was far from ideal, though I don't know the constraints under which those earlier designers were working... but we need to be willing to work with what we've got.

I understand that it's difficult to use highway money for public transport and related programs. I wonder, as did one meeting participant, just how many interesting "two year" projects we could do to traffic reduction. I would suggest that the notion that we shouldn't turn down money for highways just because we can't use it for something else has outlived its usefulness. Even if we can't get

national highway money for TDM, somebody, sometime, has to finally “just say no” to highway projects that are unnecessary, shortsighted and wasteful.

That said, I’m not against widening the northbound off-ramp or even putting in a roundabout here or there... maybe. But I’d like to look at how we spend our money as a nation and I’d like us to say no to money we don’t need and find a way to fund the projects that will address our long term concerns.

Thanks again for your work. You have a rough ride in Northampton. I hope it’s good for ya.

4. Aside from all the engineering changes being discussed to increase traffic flow at the Coolidge Bridge and entry to I-91 nearby, there is a persistent problem on Route 9 with the signage approaching the bridge from the east. I’ve used this route for over 35 years and am intimately familiar with one of the things that cause delays, quick lane changes, and sometimes collisions. The warning that I-91 south requires using the *left* lane after the bridge causes a lot of confusion to people expecting a right entrance ramp there.

On the approach to the bridge, before people settle into sometimes crowded lanes, there needs to be a *large overhead* sign indicating that the left lane leads to I-91 south, the right lane leads to both Northampton center (straight ahead) and I-91 north (right). The existing small signs by the roadside are much too little and too late.

A more radical but useful change in that same area would be to reserve the left lane on the bridge for traffic bound to I-91 south, with a solid line in the middle. As it is, there is a lot of weaving back and forth by local drivers trying to gain a few seconds of advantage. Sincerely,

5. I have just looked at the 12 proposed alterations for Interchange 19 at I-91 and Route 9. I commuted daily through this interchange (Damon Road to and from Hadley) for 28 years, and still go through this interchange constantly.

My suggestions:

NO ROTARIES! You can call them roundabouts, but a rotary is a rotary is a rotary. The one in Greenfield is horrible. I fear for my safety every time I go through it.

NO FULL INTERCHANGE ON DAMON ROAD! There would obviously be a traffic light, and the traffic will back up to Route 9. There are also times when southbound traffic on Damon Road backs up from Route 9 for at least a half mile. The light would make it back up to King Street.

My preferred alternative is the double-flyover. The main problem with the intersection is left-turn traffic from westbound Route 9 to I-91 southbound backing up to and through the intersection into Hadley.

If the double-flyover is not possible, then I would support two lanes from Route 9 west to I-91 south (or extending this turn lane further west, as has been proposed earlier), and the northbound entrance from Damon road, ONLY if there's no traffic light on Damon Road, and the northbound I-91 traffic uses a dedicated left-turn lane.

I would appreciate being notified of the next public meeting.

6. Disappointed with what was reported from recent meeting. The interchange is poor. It was poor when it was constructed. Doing nothing is certainly an option. But for those who think that the \$\$ not spent for this project can be used for something else like a new police station don't understand how things work. State/Fed road/bridge money is for roads and bridges, period. Not spent here to remedy a poor road situation it will be used in Boston. For the Gazette writer who believes there isn't a good option offered I disagree. He may be an environmentalist and a supporter of mass transit and that's great but it really doesn't matter to those coming to UMASS, 3 County Fairgrounds, events in Northampton, and others traveling who need access to a convenient river crossing. I guess my position would be either to do nothing or fix it right. No half baked job as was done 40 years ago.
7. As someone that uses the I-91 Exit 19 interchange everyday, I do not believe there is a major traffic problem. If Mass DOT does anything, it should be a MINIMAL approach. Perhaps an option that includes a roundabout. But I do not believe we should take up any more land. We should be encouraging people to use alternative modes of transportation.
8. I have lived for almost forty years in the North Street neighborhood in Northampton about halfway between downtown and the Coolidge Bridge. I currently work at Hampshire College in Amherst and generally commute by bus or bicycle unless there are no buses running, such as when the colleges are not in session, and the weather is bad.

I attended the June 14 public meeting about proposed changes to the I-91 exit 19 interchange as I did the previous public meeting held, I believe, about a year and a half ago. There were significant changes for the better in the second, June 14, meeting: There was a Project Advisory Committee that had neighborhood representation. There was a "no build" option in addition to alternatives ranging from the minimal to the extravagant. Most important, from my perspective, was the proposed "transportation demand management" concept designed to alleviate traffic congestion by enhancing currently available public transit and bicycling options.

It is clear that all of the concepts attempt, in some fashion, to improve the quality of the environment, whether by moving cars more quickly so as to reduce idling time or by improving public transit and thereby reducing the number of cars on the road and consequently the amount of emissions produced and fuel

consumed. My strong preference is to proceed as quickly as possible to create incentives for more people to ride the bus: Reduced fares, employer support for a "universal pass" system, traffic signal priorities for buses, and more frequent service would make public transit more convenient and therefore more viable. (Inconvenience and unpredictably long waits are the complaints I hear most frequently when I encourage colleagues to ride the bus.) As noted by the presenter at the meeting, these changes could be implemented and evaluated without any major construction. In addition, as someone who works professionally in services to people with disabilities, I urge you and MassDOT to take into consideration that people with mobility limitations are far better served by improvements in public transit than by speeding up automobile traffic.

At both meetings, someone in the audience raised the question regarding research findings to the effect that if you increase road capacity you will inevitably attract more traffic and require more capacity. It was striking to me as a non-professional in the field of traffic engineering and road construction, that none of the consultants had anything close to a convincing response to this question. As we move towards a future in which fossil fuels will be increasingly scarce and more difficult to extract, a strong, efficient public transit system is the most equitable and sustainable transportation option worthy of public funding.

9. I live on Riverbank Road, Northampton, in the near vicinity of the proposed exit 19 ramp project. I would like to offer my opinion that no changes should be made to the current ramp and highway configuration. My reasons include the following:

I and my neighbors will suffer continuous noise for a period of three years or more during demolition and construction. We already endured years of noise during the revamp of the Calvin Coolidge Bridge several years ago. Most people chose to live along the Connecticut River for the quiet enjoyment it provides. Several who live on my road are elderly and have lived here much of their lives. I would hate to think their final years would be full of noise and turmoil instead of the natural quietude they love and deserve.

The several millions of dollars for this project could be much better used by the state for re-employment programs, education, social services, and housing for the poor.

The proposed project plans reveal an effort that will disrupt traffic flow and back up traffic on Rt. 9, Damon Rd., and into downtown Northampton and across the bridge into Hadley and Amherst for the several years it will take to complete. This will be a hindrance to shopping, eating at restaurants, going to see movies, etc. between Amherst and Northampton and every location in between. It will harm the Rt. 9 corridor and its business owners throughout the construction period when motorists decide not to drive on Rt. 9.

I do not see any real NECESSITY for changes to be made in the current ramp configuration. Drivers seem fine with getting on and off the existing ramps 19

and 20. I have lived here near exit 19 for 26 years and I am a driver, so I can safely make this observation.

I am very concerned that the project will harm the surrounding natural environment along the precious and important Connecticut River. I am very concerned that land-taking will force a few abutter homeowners out of their homes.

In sum, I think this project is an avoidable disruption to people, wildlife, and animals and I cannot see that the benefits outweigh the minuses. Thank you.

10. I access the Coolidge Bridge at various times of day, to and from Northampton. I do not believe the congestion there, even in "rush hour", is serious enough to require draconian remedies. The disruption caused by any construction project, which might last years for more elaborate projects, MUST be considered against any long-term benefit. Available money should be invested instead in improved public transportation (the TDM Concept). As a new N-S rail corridor is developed in coming years, auto traffic will undoubtedly decrease, especially if a good E-W rail link is included. Money not spent on the I-91 Interchange should be diverted to rail.

To ease access to I-91 South from the Bridge and from I-91 North to Damon Rd, which seem to me the only significant hang-ups now, improvements should be kept within the present footprint, such as possibly Concept 12 or 13. But I repeat: my first preference is NO BUILD.

11. Thank you for taking comments about the I-91 Exit 19 project. I am writing to give my comments as someone who frequently uses this intersection as well as Damon Road and I-91.

I support the incorporation of "green" improvements as part of any proposal moving forward, i.e. improving the connections to the Norwottuck Rail Trail, and improving bus service on Rte 9.

If further improvements are still deemed necessary, I favor the cheapest and least environmentally-impactful option, which I believe may be a simple round-about.

I strongly object to any "flyover" ramps, "full access" interchanges or the like. Northampton does not require a big-city solution to resolve small-city congestion. I'd be happy to live with it "as is"! Thank you for your consideration and all your work on this project. Sincerely,

12. I am writing to comment on the Interchange 19 project on Route 91. I believe that the challenge facing our Commonwealth and our nation is to reduce our dependence on individual cars and to develop more efficient and attractive public transportation options. I am afraid that if we make substantial improvements that attract more use of cars it will be just a matter of time before the roadways

are clogged again. I am also deeply concerned about air quality in the valley, which as you may know is notoriously poor at certain times of year. Therefore I cast my vote in favor of the TDM concept. I believe it offers us a chance to take a leadership role in finding solutions to traffic that enhance the environment we live in and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Thank you for your consideration.