



Eileen M. Donoghue
City Manager

Kara Keefe Mullin
Assistant City Manager

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 29, 2021

Contact: Phil Geoffroy
Executive Assistant-Communications
978-674-4400 | pgeoffroy@lowellma.gov

City of Lowell Announces Southbound Lane Closure on Central Street to Enable Acceleration of Bridge Repair Project

LOWELL, MA – The City of Lowell has announced that the Central Street Bridge over the Pawtucket Canal will be reduced to one-way, northbound traffic beginning the week of February 8, 2021 to enable the acceleration of construction currently in progress on the bridge as part of the TIGER Bridge Project. The bridge will remain closed to southbound traffic for an anticipated duration of five months. Vehicular traffic traveling southbound from Bridge Street and Market Street will be detoured to Merrimack Street, East Merrimack, High Street, and Church Street according to a traffic management plan developed in anticipation of the lane closure.

The new, accelerated construction schedule enabled by the lane closure will shorten the project by five months, significantly reduce construction costs, and mitigate the potential of a full closure of the bridge due to deteriorating conditions.

In September 2020, a state inspection of the bridge resulted in its rating being downgraded to 3 out of 10, the lowest rating allowable for a structure to remain open for vehicular use. A further reduction in the rating of the bridge prior to completion of construction would result in an immediate closure to traffic in both directions, which would have a severe impact on the downtown roadway network.

The lane closure will allow the construction contractor, MAS Bridges, to mobilize to the roadway and sidewalk sections of the bridge to begin surface construction work and to complete construction in two phases, rather than three phases as initially anticipated. Based on this accelerated schedule, it is anticipated that the project will be completed in the spring of 2022, with substantial completion reached in 2021.

“The City of Lowell and our project team have conducted a thorough assessment of our options based on the condition of the Central Street Bridge, and determined that it is critical that we proceed under an accelerated timetable in order to mitigate the risk of a full bridge closure,” said **Lowell Commissioner of Public Works Christine Clancy**. “While reducing the bridge to one lane during construction will have an impact on downtown traffic, we believe that traffic management plan in place, along with reduced traffic due to the

pandemic, will prevent overwhelming delays for residents and other motorists. We appreciate the cooperation of the community as we work as quickly as possible to complete this is a high priority infrastructure project.”

In recognition of the anticipated impact of the lane closure to the Downtown neighborhood, the City of Lowell intends to conduct extensive outreach to Downtown businesses and residents. Virtual public meetings that will provide an overview upcoming construction and detours are scheduled for Monday, February 1 at 6:00 PM and Tuesday, February 2 at 5:00 PM. Information on how to participate in these events is available at lowellma.gov/centralstreetbridge.

The City of Lowell’s Office of Economic Development intends to conduct direct, door-to-door outreach to businesses in the vicinity to ensure their awareness of upcoming traffic changes, and has also announced new measures to help mitigate impacts to downtown businesses that may emerge as a result of construction activity.

Impacted businesses that have applied for funding through the second round of the City’s Small Business Emergency Relief Grant Program will receive favorable weighting, or additional “points,” in the process by which grantees are selected. The Office of Economic Development will also be launching a loyalty program, which will create an incentive for customers to visit downtown businesses during bridge construction.

“We recognize that this construction activity may create disruptions to certain businesses in Downtown Lowell, further exasperating the challenges that they are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **Director of Economic Development Christine McCall**. “Our office is prepared to serve as a resource for impacted businesses, and will be launching creative initiatives to help support them throughout this period.”

The Central Street Bridge over Pawtucket Canal is part of the Lowell Canal Bridges (TIGER) Program. Of the five bridges included in the program, two are substantially complete and three are still under construction. Central Street over the Pawtucket Canal is the last of the five bridges scheduled for completion, with a current completion date anticipated in September 2022. This accelerated schedule will amend the completion date to May 2022. MAS Bridges, the general contractor for the program, completed substructure work this fall and winter within the limits of the Pawtucket Canal and this next phase that will begin work on the superstructure components of the bridge.

###