

State bridge and highway work continues amidst COVID-19 response

by [Seth Daniel](#) • March 30, 2020 • [0 Comments](#)

State construction projects like the North Washington Street Bridge will continue, state officials said on Monday, despite the shutdown of many other construction projects throughout the city.

Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack said in a virtual meeting on Monday, March 23, that they would keep state road and bridge projects moving ahead during the pandemic, including the Tobin Bridge, the Chelsea Curves and the North Washington Street Bridge.

While work sites all over Boston and Charlestown have ground to a halt on the order of Mayor Martin Walsh, state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) said they had been advised by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) that outdoor construction was a low risk.

“We do plan to work on critical transportation infrastructure projects during this period, though that could change at a later time,” said Pollack. “Work on these critical road and bridge projects are continuing right now. We are working closely with the contracting companies and making sure they are practicing the proper social distancing and hygiene on their sites...It will be a project by project decision, though. There are projects where it might not be possible to fulfill the social distancing and hygiene requirements.”

One such place is at a project on Worcester, where they will not continue work, unlike here.

On the Tobin Bridge and Chelsea Curves, she said they have been working with the contractor to eliminate some functions or practice them differently. One thing they do routinely is use two people very closely together in a bucket guiding steel into place from a crane.

Highway Director Jonathan Gulliver said they are treating those situations like a haz-mat response.

“What we’re requiring contractors to do is outfit their workers differently and that might mean they would have to adopt a different protocol and approach that kind of work as if it were a haz-mat situation with workers wearing heavy personal protective equipment...It isn’t enough to shut down a major job, but there will be a slowdown to adjust to these new directions.”

Pollack said projects like North Washington and the Tobin have been working over the winter, and already have protocols to button up a project quickly in case of a blizzard. Those same protocols will be used on these projects if a sudden closure of work is required.

She said MassDOT is also at the point in the year when they begin to think about the spring and summer construction season and give orders to proceed with work. That’s a decision that will be made case by case and at a later date.

• Driver’s licenses and inspection stickers

To keep everyone from going out during the pandemic, the Registry has given a 60-day extension to anyone whose regular driver’s license expires in March or April. The same is being done for anyone that has to renew their inspection stickers in March or April.

Officials said no one needs to go out to a gas station to get an inspection or to the RMV to renew a license during the next 60 days.