



Liberty Street causeway to reopen in September, MassDOT says

BY ETHAN FORMAN STAFF WRITER | Posted: Wednesday, July 8, 2015 9:50 pm

DANVERS — The Massachusetts Department of Transportation is planning a Sept. 1 opening of the long closed causeway that carries Liberty Street over the Porter River.

The causeway has been closed to traffic since Dec. 8 due to concerns about safety after one of the culverts underneath the road was found to have deteriorated. In addition, since May 1, the sidewalk between the north and south sides of the river has been closed to pedestrians wishing to cross the river so the work could commence.

The silver lining, project leaders say, is that both culverts are being replaced over the course of one summer, instead of two, lessening the amount of time the causeway has to be closed in the future. The state is rebuilding the two culverts that carry the Porter River through the causeway.

The project, when complete, will also raise the causeway to make it less prone to flooding, reconstruct the sidewalk on both sides of the street and add a pickup and drop-off area at the Riverside School. A public meeting about the \$8.5 million state project is scheduled with MassDOT officials at the Riverside School on Aug. 20, town Engineer Richard Rodgers said.

The street serves as a north-south cut-through from Route 62 and Beverly to the north, and Route 35 and Salem to the south. To cross the river, drivers are forced to detour on Route 128. The biggest issue with the road project has been the culverts, one on the southern end of the causeway and the other at the northern end. The causeway was initially supposed to be closed in phases over three summers to replace them. In the fall of 2014, only traffic headed south on Liberty Street was permitted to cross the causeway. Northbound traffic had to detour around the project using the highway.

However, when the south culvert was inspected last December it was found to be in such bad shape the entire causeway was closed, and the construction schedule revised so that both culverts could be replaced this summer. So far, the south culvert has been installed, Rodgers said. Once that work is complete, the north culvert will be closed, the south one opened, and the north culvert will be rebuilt.



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Ethan Forman/Staff photo

Work is proceeding on the Liberty Street project in Danvers, with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation saying it expects the causeway to reopen to traffic Sept. 1. The causeway has been closed since December so that crews can replace two culverts in the span over the Porter River.

Amanda Richard, deputy press secretary for MassDOT, said the south culvert wing walls are complete and armor stone has been placed at the mouth of the culvert. It's expected the new culvert will be fully opened by Thursday, July 9. Work on the north culvert is expected to start the week of July 20 and be completed by late August. "Two lane traffic will be open on Sept. 1st," Richard said.

The project also includes the rehabilitation of Liberty Street from Port Corner to Pauline Road, and crews have been focusing on this work north of the culverts, Rodgers said. Paving should begin the week of July 20, Richard said. MassDOT plans to close the causeway next summer to place the utilities in the causeway and remove a temporary utility bridge over the Porter River that is presently carrying these lines. The project should wrap up by September 2017, and MassDOT does not anticipate a third causeway closure in 2017, Richard said.

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