

April 10, 2026

Dear Neighbor:

There was a recent public hearing on the replacement of the retaining wall on Rte. 7 where DOT presented their plan. I've written my public comments and sent them to Carrie Lavallee, the chief engineer. Would you consider emailing Carrie in support of my letter?

DOTs present design of the wall will kill many many animals. The design I support involves a shortened wall, to still support the bank below Jamieson Hts., but not to extend into the flatter zone towards Pownal. This would create a path for animals to cross without getting trapped.

Thank you for considering this request. Carrie's email is:

MassDOTProjectManagement@dot.state.ma.us or mail to Carrie Lavallee, MassDOT Highway Division, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116-3973. She is taking public comment until April 17th. Thanks again.

Todd Fiorentino
263 North Street



732-595-6064

April 10, 2026

Carrie E. Lavallee, P.E., Chief Engineer

MassDOT – Highway Division

10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116-3973

Attn.: Project Management

Dear Ms. Lavallee:

I didn't catch the name of the design engineer (I assume that was his title) who presented at our recent public hearing in Williamstown, MA regarding project file 613074. I will just refer to him as DE in this letter.

Please consider this letter (and the attached drawing) as a submission to be added to public comment for this project. I would like to request more information:

Where will the utility poles be relocated to? It says they will be moved across the street, I assume DOT would put the pole between houses (and not in front of any house, as that would impact home values and curb appeal). Please email me an image of the type of pole (I'm told it would be 50 ft. towering over our house essentially) and planned placement. I live at 263 North Street. Oddly, I was told by a representative at the meeting, that in order to lessen impact, they chose a giant pole. This is pretty counterintuitive. Will it have a light on it? My daughter and I currently stargaze in our backyard, so added light pollution is not a selling point for us. The only reason I can think of to build so big, is if DOT is considering leasing the pole out to telecom companies for cell signal down the line.

I have submitted a drawing that shows how the poles could remain on the east side. We were told by the DE that my idea of grading the land up, adding concrete, clay and compost and planting deep rooted trees or plantings, is not feasible because there is too much rock. Then, we were told that there isn't enough rock to mount a new telephone pole on the east side. Of course, since DOT is planning to do demolition work, on the rock, DOT has full control over how much or how little rock there is to work with, in the same way that DOT has the power to bring in aggregate of any type: clay, compost, etc. or hire a landscape architect as a consultant.

I'm puzzling over this project. It's 25% designed. You are seeking comment at this point, presumably to get tweaks, because you've already started down this path (of building a full retaining wall again, which will chip and crack over time, of course) and you seem committed to another big wall.

I tried to explain during the hearing that about 1/3 of the wall actually rests in an area that is Not supporting the bank coming down from Jamieson Hts. Rd. The 2/3 of the wall that is towards the circle, is supporting that road. But down at the other end, it starts to naturally grade and blend with lawn.

There is a major reason for why I am sending so much information to you now and it's not NIMBY. It has to do with the slaughter of animals, trying to cross at DOTs wall, and getting trapped with nowhere to go. They end up dead. Imagine the last horror film you saw, the last slasher film. That's the visual. I have picked up viscera ranging from kidneys to hearts, seriously, with my shovel and moved the carcasses, of all kinds, to the woods. This is an interrupted wildlife corridor. Animals ranging from raccoons to woodchucks to deer to bobcats to bears (yes, I've even seen baby bears hit by cars in my life, sadly), to rabbits, and on and on, all come down to Hemlock Brook, drink, then attempt to cross the road. Out West, there has been a real movement to create novel solutions to this problem. I realize DOT doesn't have the budget for some of these interventions, but some of the fixes, like the one I'm suggesting, do not cost much, and may save the agency money in the long run. Also, partner agencies like DEC will be glad to see that you've added them to your designs.

Please let me know which agency and consultant is leading the Environmental Assessment; and if an impact statement will be done as well.

Lastly, just a note on how the meeting was handled. I believe DOT was there to listen to us, to the people who live here every day, and see what really happens on this road. Somehow, that goal of listening did get lost in translation. Stephanie Boyd, one of our city councilors, made a simple recommendation to move the curb back to allow for more room for cyclists. She was immediately met with a "no," we've already looked at that, it's not in the budget. Explain to me how moving a curb (it must be built either way, and the road will be paved either way) costs DOT extra money? It doesn't. It's purely a design element. You want a buffer for your new wall. We want safe cyclists.

So, again, when you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail. But DOT has to realize that you're working in a designated wetland area, Hemlock Brook, rich in wildlife. You're also on a major cycling route. And you have houses right across the street who don't love the idea of towering utility poles in front of their houses. Why crush the poles into our side when the other side is nothing but empty space? Something isn't adding up here. I hope you will take a second look. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Todd Fiorentino

732-595-6064

Add Aggregate (cement)
 + Gravel
 up thru → Natural
 Dry Route Plantings

Retaining
 Wall

Footprint
 (cement)

Use: concrete w/ rock
 (existing) as base; all
 clay & compact.

Benefits:

* Eliminates most of kill-zone; telephone pole can remain on East side of street; lower cost as retaining wall is not as big; plantings & rock of existing existing; less maintenance; partial wildlife corridor is created, running from creek brook.

Suggest contextually landscape solution for detailed plan. Also takes a fraction approach to environmental assessments for all coming.

There is a driveway & a road as you go up Rte. 7 towards the circle, on the left, both of which utilize forest / plantings to grade the bank along with grading. Neither have walls below.

Note:

