



## Town of West Newbury Select Board

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381 Main Street, West Newbury, MA 01985 | 978-363-1100, Ext. 115  
[selectboard@wnewbury.org](mailto:selectboard@wnewbury.org)

June 27, 2022

To: Secretary Jamey Tesler, MassDOT  
RE: Rocks Village Bridge -Truck Restrictions  
Dear Secretary Tesler,


On March 17, 2022 an over height truck struck the Rocks Village Bridge and since then the bridge has been closed to all vehicular and foot traffic. This is the third time in the last 4 years that the Rocks Village Bridge has been closed to all traffic due to an over height truck using and damaging the bridge. This recent collision has caused the most significant damage, with the timeline for repairs and reopening still uncertain.

The Select Board unanimously agreed that the MassDOT should designate a permanent truck restriction for the bridge. The Board also strongly urges the installation of height restriction warning signals, similar to that on Storrow Dr. and Soldier Field Rd., on both sides of the river crossing, and additional signage along Routes 110 and 113 informing drivers that truck travel over the bridge is restricted to vehicles under 12 feet 6 inches.

The problems resulting from this recent incident have been compounded by current gas prices. School buses now must take considerably longer routes to transport Merrimac students to and from Pentucket Regional Middle and High Schools and to transport Groveland and West Newbury students to and from the Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School. Additionally, any shared employees between communities on both sides of the river are now extraordinarily affected by this additional travel time and cost. This is in addition to the significant inconvenience (and cost) to residents of West Newbury, Haverhill, and others within the region whose regular travel routes rely on use of the Rocks Village Bridge.

The Select Board is hopeful that the MassDOT will make the changes requested to prevent this from happening in the future.

Sincerely,

  
David Archibald, Chair  
West Newbury Select Board

CC: Mayor Fiorentini, Haverhill Council  
President Jordon, Senator Tarr,  
Senator DiZoglio, Representative  
Mirra, Representative Vargas, and  
Representative Kelcourse

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**CITY OF HAVERHILL**

HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS 01830-5843

August 23, 2022

Honorable Charlie Baker, Governor  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House, 24 Beacon Street, Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

The Haverhill City Council requests your immediate assistance and intervention in a matter affecting the City of Haverhill and the Town of West Newbury, namely the recently damaged Rocks Village Bridge that connects our two communities. Enclosed is a copy of a letter that was sent to your Secretary of Transportation, Jamey Tesler, from the Town of West Newbury Select Board. The Haverhill City Council supports the proposed solution to this recurring and expensive problem as outlined in the Select Board's letter, specifically that MassDOT should designate a permanent truck restriction for the bridge.

At present the MassDOT position on this request is to not support a heavy commercial vehicle exclusion (HCVE). Reasons given were that when this bridge went through the major rehabilitation completed in 2013, the design was developed to accommodate all types of traffic/vehicles as the bridge provides inter-local and regional connectivity between communities in the area and serves as one of only three crossings of the Merrimack River in that area. If trucks were not allowed to cross at this location, they would be required to travel four miles south to the Bates Bridge in Groveland/Haverhill, or over six miles north to the Chain Bridge/Hines Bridge in Newburyport/Amesbury. In accordance with Chapter 85, Section 2 of the General Laws, these neighboring municipalities would need to grant permission for the additional truck traffic to travel along the alternative routes through each community.

The reasons not to approve a permanent HCVE given by MassDOT make no sense to us who live in Haverhill or West Newbury. The bridge has been closed since March 17, 2022, and those trucks MassDOT talks about are already using those alternative routes and have had to use those alternative routes many times over the years, particularly in 2012-2013 while the bridge was reconstructed and three times in the last four years because of heavy commercial vehicles damage to the structure. We are not aware of any surrounding communities ever having complained about increased heavy commercial vehicles along the alternative routes.

MassDOT instead wants to review options to better alert drivers of the clearance restriction on the bridge, including augmenting the current advanced warning signage with supplemental, robust signing at locations outside of the Rocks Village Historic District. There is even talk about placing those stark

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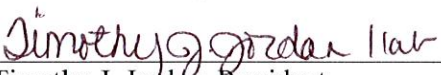
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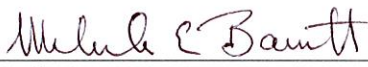
HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS 01830-5843


yellow bars across each side of the bridge preventing trucks from hitting the bridge. These options are unacceptable to us and to the West Newbury Select Board. We have lived through this recurring problem, and it is time to ask you to personally intervene and direct the MassDOT to work on a permanent truck restriction instead of augmenting signage and potentially destroying the integrity of the Rocks Village Historic District with a yellow concrete bar placed before the bridge and next to the historic and newly restored Hand Tub House.

The Haverhill City Council and West Newbury Select Board urges you to do the right thing for both Haverhill and West Newbury and support the permanent exclusion of heavy commercial trucks on the historic Rocks Village Bridge. We also would welcome you to come and tour the area personally with us so you can understand the truly unique areas that abut the Rocks Village Bridge and better understand why the citizens of both communities deserve to have a permanent exclusion as the correct resolution to this ongoing and expensive problem. Thank you.


The Haverhill City Council,

  
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Timothy J. Jordan, President


  
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Melinda E. Barrett

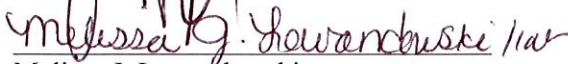
  
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Enclosure: West Newbury Select Board Letter to Secretary of Transportation

c: Jamey Tesler, Secretary, MassDOT, Senator Diana DiZoglio, Senator Bruce Tarr, Representative Andres Vargas, Representative Lenny Mirra, Representative James Kelcourse, Mayor James Fiorentini, Chairperson David Archibald, West Newbury Select Board