

Gloucester welcomes plan to replace 106-year-old drawbridge

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An estimated \$50 million plan to replace the bridge over the Annisquam River will go out to bid within two months. Construction is scheduled to take four years.

By [Laura Crimaldi](#)

GLOBE STAFF MARCH 11, 2017

Descriptions of the 106-year-old drawbridge in Gloucester that is traversed by an average of 26 commuter rail trains each weekday don't exactly inspire confidence.

At different times, various MBTA officials have called the bridge over the Annisquam River “old and unreliable,” “past its useful life,” and “structurally deficient.”

But after years of hearing about the bridge’s deterioration, Gloucester residents this week got some good news: an estimated \$50 million plan by the state to replace the bridge is going out to bid within two months.

“It’s a very endangered bridge,” said Christopher Sicuranza, director of communications for Gloucester. “It’s been a situation that they’ve been aware of since at least 2010.”



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State Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack announced the project was going out to bid during a gathering Thursday of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, city and state officials said. More than \$4.5 million has been spent so far on design and engineering, the state said.

Sicuranza said Pollack is the first state official to commit to a timeline for the project. Gloucester’s mayor, Sefatia Romeo Theken, lauded her Friday for tackling the project with “greater urgency.”

“The Annisquam River rail drawbridge has admirably served the Cape Ann community for over a hundred years, so any news from our state partners for improvements is certainly welcome,” she said in a statement.

The plan calls for replacing the bridge, including its mechanical and electrical components. The support system



on one side of the bridge — a system of wooden trestles and piles — would be dismantled and a new structure of precast concrete beams on top of steel pipe piles would be constructed, the MBTA said.

Officials plan to continue rail service over the bridge during construction by doing the project in two stages, said T spokesman Joe Pesaturo. One half of the bridge will be torn down and rebuilt while rail traffic continues on the other side, he said.

To accommodate construction, a temporary turnout would be installed before work begins, the T said.

Construction is scheduled to take four years, Pesaturo said. The bridge is on the Newburyport/Rockport commuter rail line.

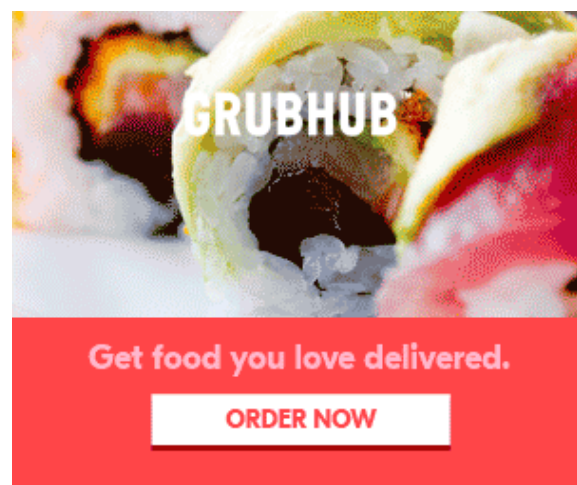
It was built in 1911 using a design created by the architect of the Golden Gate Bridge, according to the minutes from a February 2016 Gloucester City Council meeting with MBTA officials.

It was reconstructed in 1932 and underwent a structural rehabilitation in 1984, the T said. The following year, the state replaced the machinery and electrical components that open and close the bridge.

Delays on that section of the rail line aren't uncommon during hot weather, Sicuranza said, because the rails expand and need to be hosed down with water.

In January 2012, the inbound track was closed for more than three hours after an inspection of the bridge revealed a structural deficiency, according to a report published at the time in the Gloucester Times.

Those kinds of delays have convinced some to forgo using commuter rail, said Eileen Duff, a Gloucester resident who serves on the Governor's Council.



“

'It's a very endangered bridge.'

“The train doesn’t run as well as it can. It’s not necessarily reliable,” said Duff, who stopped using the service because it wasn’t a dependable way to get to Boston. “It’s not the fault of the people who work on the trains. It’s the infrastructure not being kept up.”

Steve Poftak, who serves on the MBTA’s Fiscal and Management Control Board, said the system is working to restore infrastructure to a “state of good repair.”

“It’s been a challenge to get the T’s capital spending to the point where it needs to be to chip away at this backlog,” he said. “We’re working very hard to ramp up spending, but we’re not close to where we need to be right now.”

Matt Rocheleau of the Globe staff contributed to this report. Laura Crimaldi can be reached at laura.crimaldi@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter [@lauracrimaldi](https://twitter.com/lauracrimaldi).

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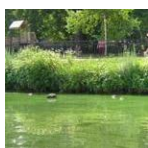
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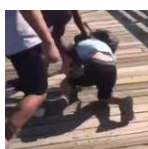
Police disperse hundreds of youths in the North End

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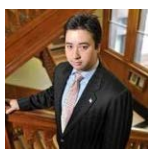
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Cambridge city councilor to leave politics

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Michelle Carter receives 15 months in jail; will remain free pending appeal

A judge sentenced Michelle Carter to two and a half years, with 15 months to serve and 15 months probation, for goading her boyfriend to kill himself in a high-profile texting suicide case. However, he allowed Carter to remain free while awaiting appeal. [MORE...](#)



'Dukes of Hazzard' actor arrested in Waltham

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