FALL RIVER – Friday, September 13, 2013 – Governor Deval Patrick today joined MassDOT Secretary and CEO Richard Davey and local officials to break ground on the $197 million project to reconstruct the interchange of Route 79 and I-195 in Fall River.

“This is a truly transformative project for Fall River and the South Coast,” said Governor Patrick. “It will put 300 people to work and position Fall River as a hub for economic development. After years of neglect, our Accelerated Bridge Program is rebuilding hundreds of the Commonwealth’s bridges, putting people to work and delivering projects faster and more efficiently than ever before. There is more work to do, but I am proud of what we have accomplished in rebuilding our infrastructure and leaving it stronger for the next generation.”

Known locally as the "spaghetti ramps," the Route 79/I-195 interchange is a bi-level structure consisting of 111 spans that was built in 1965. Currently, 11 bridges within the interchange are structurally deficient and many other components are functionally...
Governor Patrick Breaks Ground on Highway Project

obsolete. By simplifying the roadways, this project will help to decrease travel times through this congested interchange. The final configuration of the project will also result in the complete removal of the elevated roadways and replace them with a surface roadway that improves safety for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists. Additionally, the removal of the elevated structures will allow for increased access to Fall River's waterfront, unlocking development potential for the city to grow a prime area for future opportunity.

"While this is a major opportunity to fix what we have, it's also a chance to incorporate new thinking into how we can provide more and better accommodations for new needs like walking and cycling," said Secretary Davey. "But moreover, this job is a recognition of the positive impacts transportation projects can have on the economy, when we think broadly about what we want out of the finished product and when we're smart about what we build."

The project, which is funded through the Patrick Administration’s Accelerated Bridge Program, is the final of the five “megaprojects” to start construction. The other megaprojects are the Burns Bridge in Worcester and Shrewsbury, the Fore River Bridge in Quincy and Weymouth, the Longfellow Bridge in Boston and Cambridge and the Whittier Bridge in Amesbury and Newburyport, which carries I-95 over the Merrimack River.

The Patrick Administration’s Accelerated Bridge Program started in 2008 and is an eight-year, $3 billion statewide program to rebuild or repair structurally deficient bridges. Since 2008, the number of structurally deficient bridges in the Commonwealth has dropped from 543 to 436, a decline of over 19 percent.

As of August 1, 2013, the Accelerated Bridge Program has completed 138 bridge projects, with another 38 bridge projects in construction and an additional 22 bridge projects scheduled to start construction within the next calendar year. Over the course of the eight years, well over 200 bridges are planned to be replaced or repaired.

“Today’s groundbreaking is a sign of the great things to come in Fall River,” said Congressman Bill Keating. “Infrastructure projects like the Route 79 and I-195 reconstruction are not just about improving traffic and our roadways. They pay dividends for years to come by providing good-paying jobs while modernizing our aging infrastructure. This grant is a huge win for the Fall River community.”

“By better connecting Fall River to its waterfront – and improving accessibility across the board – this project will be an enormous boon to the City’s economic development efforts,” said Congressman Joe Kennedy. “From the revitalization of the waterfront to the new bio-park: Fall River is a powerful example of the development potential that exists across the South Coast. I’d like to thank Governor Patrick and his Administration for continuing to prioritize this region and applaud the leadership of Mayor Flanagan and the other tremendous local leaders this city is luck to have.”

“Today’s groundbreaking is a culmination of the hard-work from the Patrick Administration, MassDOT and the tireless efforts of local advocates,” said Senator Michael Rodrigues. “The reconstruction of these heavily-used interchanges around Route 79 and I-195 will increase transportation efficiency, make businesses more accessible, and stimulate economic growth and tourism, making Fall River a better place to live, work, and visit. I look forward to seeing the positive impact this project will have on all of us in the region.”
"The 'spaghetti ramps/Route 79 project' through the Accelerated Bridge Program will have a positive effect on my district across the river," said Representative Patricia Haddad. "While it may be inconveniencing at first to area motorists, in the long run it will add to the economic development our immediate region."

On June 29, 2013, the MassDOT Board of Directors authorized the award the the design-build contract to the joint venture, Barletta Heavy Division-O&G Industries, Inc. Construction is expected to be complete in the fall of 2016.

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