



CHARLES RIVER

conservancy

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September 25, 2014

Patricia Leavenworth, PE
MassDOT, Chief Engineer
10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA, 02116
Attn: Bridge Project Management – Project File No. 606475

Dear Ms. Leavenworth,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the Allston I-90 Interchange Improvement Project. This project is at the very core of our geographic area and also at the core of our mission.

As you might be aware, the mission of the Charles River Conservancy, which will celebrate its 15th anniversary next year, is to provide stewardship and enhancements for the urban parklands from the Boston Harbor to the Watertown Dam. With over 25,000 supporters and volunteers, we represent many groups on both sides of the river.

The I-90 project might have started as a highway project, but it has the potential to bring urban design and recreational opportunities to an area that was previously inaccessible to residents and visitors. Many of the opportunities inherent in this project are closely linked to policies that have been adopted by MassDOT in recent years, including the GreenDOT initiative, the Healthy Transportation Compact, and the walk/bike/transit mode shift goals for 2030.

While the I-90 project is being built, many residents of Allston and other parkland users will have to endure years of construction and negative impacts. To mitigate these effects and to achieve a successful transportation project for your multi-modal customers, we urge you to add design elements known collectively as the Allston Esplanade:

1. Add at least three acres of new parkland along the riverbanks (between Double Tree Hotel and the Mass Pike viaduct) by moving Soldiers' Field Road away from the river's edge.
2. Widen the parkland next to the Mass Pike viaduct. The new viaduct should not be made wider, as that will not allow necessary width for the parkland.

3. Build the "West Station" transit station to provide sustainable mass transportation for the users of the Allston Esplanade, for the existing community, and for the new development that will be built south of Cambridge Street.
4. Provide a river crossing for cyclists and pedestrians on or near the Grand Junction railroad bridge that passes under the BU Bridge. This should be done while also building tracks for a 2nd Grand Junction transit line to provide appropriate service frequency between West Station and Kendall Square.
5. Create new pathways, both in the Allston Esplanade and connecting the neighborhoods to the river, that are twenty five (25) feet wide to safely and comfortably accommodate everyone - walkers, strollers, joggers, runners, and the handicapped, with physically separated space for cyclists.

We see this project as a win-win opportunity for MassDOT, the parklands and the community. I look forward to this project becoming a wonderful success for public health, recreation, our environment, and the quality of life for Massachusetts residents. Thank you for your consideration of these points.

Sincerely,

Renata von Tscharnner

Renata von Tscharnner
Founder and President
Charles River Conservancy