

December 9, 2008

Rick Sullivan, Commissioner
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114-2104

Dear Commissioner Sullivan,

The repair of the Charles River basin bridges will ensure that critical elements of the transportation infrastructure continue to play a central role in the region's economic and social network. With this in mind, it is key that they also evolve in a way to meet the growing and wide variety of users of these facilities. We remain grateful and optimistic that the DCR will use this opportunity to make much needed multi-modal improvements to the bridges. However, we still remain concerned that opportunities may be missed, particularly towards the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists.

In addition to structural improvements, the Charles River bridges need pedestrian, public transit and bicycle improvements – as well as improved car and truck safety. Major improvements to these bridges will not happen again for decades, so it is vital to take advantage of this opportunity to increase safety and efficiency for all users. And since the core mission of the DCR is to promote and provide access to our valuable parklands, it is essential that the infrastructure in and around the parks are as accessible and accommodating to a wide range of users. DCR is well-positioned to respond to and promote a mode shift away from automobiles, benefiting our cities and our citizens. Not only is this the right thing to do for social equity, health, the economy and the environment, it is also required under Massachusetts state law. (MGL 90E§2A (1996) requires making all reasonable provisions for the accommodation of bicycle and pedestrian traffic in the planning, design, and reconstruction of state funded-roadway projects. This law was reinforced with the 2006 MassHighway Project Design and Development Guide.)

After two public meetings (BU Bridge 10/16/08 and Craigie Bridges 11/17/08), our meeting on 10/15/08, and the Charles Circle/Longfellow walk on 11/10/08, **we would like your commitment to the items discussed (see list below), and a timetable for action.** In addition, we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide further feedback and suggestions as specific designs are created.

Boston University Bridge

We appreciate your commitment to bike lanes on the bridge, however we wish to ensure that other improvements are also committed to, including:

- Provide bike lanes during construction
- Improve the intersections at either end of the bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Improve the bridge approaches for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Hire a bicycle and pedestrian design consultant for all bridges
- Improve lighting on the bridge
- Improve overall safety during sidewalk and full construction
- Create a connection directly to the Charles River path and parklands from the Boston side of the bridge

Craigie Bridges

The widening of the sidewalk in front of the Museum is a small improvement; however, there are others that can be made without delaying the project if dealt with immediately. There is room in the cross section to adjust lane and sidewalk widths to accommodate all users – vehicles, pedestrians, recreational bicyclists and commuter bicyclists:

- Narrow the travel lanes to 9' – 10' and dedicate the available right-of-way to bicyclists and pedestrians
- Provide separated cycle tracks, or striped bike lanes in both directions.
- Add a traffic light at the point in front of the museum where the future inlet bridge will be built and coordinate all the traffic lights to facilitate throughput.
- Redesign the museum entrances and exits.
- Put bike lanes through Leverett Circle and along Martha Road. Martha Road's existing sidewalk is heavily used but in many places, its effective width is 1 person, therefore, sidewalks should be widened in concert with the addition of bike lanes / cycle tracks

Charles Circle/Longfellow Bridge

- Create a sidewalk on downstream side of bridge at the Boston end of the bridge
- Install curb cuts and paint crosswalk at new downstream sidewalk and connecting island (across ramp from outbound Storrow Drive)
- Install "Ped Crossing" warning barrels at critical unprotected crossing locations (5 locations)
- Paint bike lanes through intersection (outbound from Cambridge Street to the bridge)
- Paint bike boxes
- Get public process underway for Longfellow Bridge design before it advances to 25% design
- Tighten curb radius at ramp from outbound Storrow Drive onto Longfellow

- Tighten curb radius at ramp from outbound Memorial Drive onto Broadway
- Create sidewalk on upstream side of bridge entering Charles Circle - may require reducing to two travel lanes
- In addition, we would like to know what the schedule is for full reconstruction of the Longfellow Bridge as well as what the current plans look like. It is key that the current plans are revisited before construction, as mode shifts have continued since the plans were created in the 1990s.

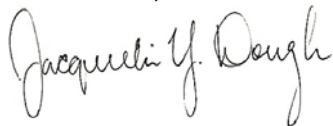
Additional bridges

- We would also like a list of the next bridges you are working on, a commitment to work with the public prior to the 25% design stage for each project, and a schedule for that interaction
- Hire a bicycle and pedestrian design consultant for all bridges

We are very concerned that in the scramble to meet the Governor's accelerated bridge repair deadlines, additional metro-area bridges will be rushed to advanced design without opportunity for public input about functional improvements.

Please respond to our request via Jackie Douglas of LivableStreets Alliance who will serve as our point of contact. Jackie can be reached at 617.621.1746 and jackie@livablestreets.info

Thank You,



Jacqueline Douglas, Transportation Advocate, LivableStreets Alliance

On behalf of:

Wendy Landman, Executive Director, WalkBoston

Renata von Tscharnier, President, Charles River Conservancy

Chris Hart, Director of Urban and Transit Projects, Institute for Human-Centered Design

David Watson, Executive Director, MassBike