

September 29, 2014

**To: Patricia Leavenworth
Chief Engineer
MassDOT Highway Division
10 Park Plaza Boston, MA 02116**

Attn: Bridge Project Management – Project File No. 606475

Dear Ms. Leavenworth:

The Allston I-90 Interchange Improvement Project can bring a wide variety of benefits to the Commonwealth, City of Boston, and people who live, work, and commute in the area. I hope you will agree that this project is also an opportunity to advance important State initiatives including GreenDOT, the Healthy Transportation Compact, the bike/walk/transit Mode Shift Goal, and Environmental Justice policy.

That being said, our organizations are deeply concerned with several aspects of the current design and process:

Topics of concern from our organizations and representatives:

- MassDOT should completely integrate planning and construction of the relocated Pike at the same time as the new West Station.
- Pike and rail routes should be decked over for future development and to give pedestrian, bicycle and bus access between North and South Allston.
- A wide riverside park – called the Allston Esplanade - should extend between the BU Bridge and the River Street Bridge.
- Where Soldiers Field Road is parallel to the Pike, it should be placed under the Mass Pike viaduct to allow widening the park strip along the Charles River.
- The Pike viaduct should not be widened beyond its current 8 lanes where it would encroach on the Charles River parkland.
- A mall with separate pedestrian and bicycle paths should extend across the project and into the Allston Esplanade.
- MassDOT should have a long-term process of planning for the Mass Pike Relocation and West Station that involves residents and advocacy groups.

Thank you for your concern and willingness to review our comments, which are detailed in the next few pages. We look forward to working with in the future on this project and its important elements.

Sincerely,

Allston Village Main Streets
Alana Olsen

Allston- Brighton Community Development Corporation
Carol Ridge-Martinez, Executive Director
Allston Board of Trade
Marc Kadish
Allston Civic Association
Matt Danish
Allston/Brighton bikes
Galen Mook
Boston Bicyclists' Union
Pete Stidman, Executive Director
Charles River Conservancy
Harry Mattison
Livable Streets Alliance
Glen Berkowitz
MassBike
David Watson, Executive Director
WalkBoston
Wendy Landman, Executive Director

Residents of Allston:

Rochelle Dunn
Paola M. Ferrer, Esq.
Anabela Gomes
Bruce Houghton
Wayne Mackenzie
Rich Parr
Jessica Robertson

Details of our views on the MassDOT Turnpike and West Station projects:

MassDOT planning for the I-90 interchange area

- A. MassDOT should have only one planning process for the Mass Pike Relocation and the proposed West Station to fully integrate proposals for highway and track relocation and to maximize access to both the highway and commuter rail services.
- B. Access to West Station by all modes - rail and road, pedestrian and bicycle – and the transit headhouse, the main line and Grand Junction double tracks should be built in conjunction with the roadway project – not after it.
- C. A Project Team should be created to oversee highway, transit and land use planning for the area, and should include urban planners, architects, landscaping architects, and individuals with placemaking expertise. Project Team subcommittees such as a Design Advisory Group should be created to advise the larger team.
- D. MassDOT should encourage public involvement throughout the design and development process for the highway, transit and land use improvements, and all future involvement of citizens and professional advisors should be planned to meet at least monthly.
- E. The process of planning should be staffed and included as an expense item in the design and construction process for both the highway and the rail improvements.

Mass Pike Relocation

- A. Land that is currently Charles River parkland should not be used to build a wider viaduct for the Mass Pike or one that is closer to the river. Parallel parkland should be used only as a temporary, last resort for construction purposes and not for breakdown lanes for the Pike. Designs for reconstructing the Mass Pike viaduct should include the plan for Soldiers Field Road to be fully relocated and rebuilt between the BU Bridge and the River Street Bridge.
- B. Slopes and clearances should be designed so that the highway will be reach the railroad grade at a point east of Babcock Street.
- C. The Mass Pike roadway should be designed so that it can easily be decked and decks should be built as part of the construction process. Deferring decking over the Pike until after the new highway is operational, even as uses of the deck are being explored, will create significant cost and safety problems.
- D. Access roads to the Turnpike from Cambridge Street should align with Babcock, Alcorn and Malvern Streets so that pedestrian, bicycle and bus connections can be easily made across the rail yard.

- E. Ramps to the service roads should not be designed as permanent limited-access facilities lined with unusable sidewalks as at the Melnea Cass Boulevard entrance to the Southeast Expressway. Access to ramps and service roads should be limited cautiously, and no limited access ramps should extend more than one city block north of the relocated Mass Pike.

West Station

- A. The design for West Station should be based on double tracks for both the Boston to Worcester Line and double tracks for future frequent service on the Grand Junction Line.
- B. All tracks for the station and the rail yard should be lowered, if only a few feet, to allow for better north-south connections over the project area.
- C. Connections for all access to the West Station headhouse will involve use of the air rights above the railroad tracks. Pedestrian and bicycle access to the headhouse should be constructed across the air rights. Bus access on the air rights should be provided from Cambridge Street and from Commonwealth Avenue via Babcock and Malvern Streets and a roadway parallel to Ashford Street to provide full bus access.
- D. The layout of the tracks in the rail yard should be detailed as part of the design for reconstructing the Mass Pike interchange, with upgrading of the spacing between tracks to allow construction on the air rights above them. MassDOT should construct air rights decks as part of the West Station and Mass Pike projects. Potential users of the air rights next to West Station should be found as soon as possible.
- E. The layout of the tracks should include mitigation for the Pratt Street neighborhood that lowers noise, perhaps through an 8' high planted berm.

Soldiers Field Road and the Allston Esplanade

- A. Soldiers Field Road should be permanently moved away from the river as far as possible, to a location partially under the Mass Pike viaduct between Commonwealth Avenue and Babcock Street and from the end of that viaduct to the River Street Bridge.
- B. The Allston Esplanade - a wide, significant signature public space - should be created on the river's edge adjacent to the relocated Soldiers Field Road, using the inspiration provided by the Boston Society of Architects presentations. Designs for the Allston Esplanade should extend at a minimum from the BU Bridge to the Western Avenue Bridge.
- C. Wide pedestrian and bicycle paths should be provided along the river between the River Street Bridge to the BU Bridge.

- D. Connections to and from riverside paths should be provided by bridging the relocated Soldiers Field Road to connect to a landscaped mall

Bicycle, Pedestrian and Bus Connections

- A. A Charles River crossing for pedestrians and bicycles is mandatory. The best location would be the vicinity of the existing Grand Junction Bridge. If such a crossing is impossible to design and construct, the new pedestrian/bicycle bridge should be built west of the existing Grand Junction Bridge.
- B. A landscaped mall for the Peoples' Pike shared use path should be constructed across the project site between the Lincoln Street/Cambridge Street bridge over the Pike to the Charles River paths. The Commonwealth Avenue Mall may be a prototype for the design of the mall.
- C. The shared use path should:
- Have separate paths for two-way bike and pedestrian travel with a minimum overall corridor width of 25'.
 - Have direct connections over the Pike and rail yards to Commonwealth Avenue via Babcock and Malvern Streets
- D. Bus connections should be provided north-south across the project area. Bus routes should be considered in all designs for West Station and the Mass Pike to provide connections to:
- West Station
 - Harvard Square
 - Commonwealth Avenue via Babcock and Malvern Streets.
 - Harvard Avenue
 - Cambridge Street

Street Design

- A. A 'complete streets' design standard should be used throughout the project area and include all of the area that will be rebuilt following removal of the I-90 interchange and its connecting roadways.
- B. The redesign of Cambridge Street should carefully consider and fit into the existing residential neighborhoods. If Cambridge Street is to be split into two one-way streets, the existing Cambridge Street should:
- Become one-way westbound
 - Be narrowed considerably, if it is to be one-way westbound, to respect the residential community (existing and future) on either side of the street.
 - Have no double-left turn lanes.
 - Be residential in character, with heavy traffic diverted by the design of new streets.

- C. Babcock and Malvern Streets between Commonwealth Avenue and the rail yards should be designed to serve pedestrian, bicycle, and bus riders, with connections across the rail yards and the Mass Pike into North Alston.