



WalkBoston

Stephen Pritchard, Secretary
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge St., Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114
attn: MEPA Office, Deirdre Buckley

John A. Blundo, P.E.
Chief Engineer
Massachusetts Highway Department
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116

June 7, 2006

Re: Restoration of the Longfellow Bridge/Charles River
EOEA #13777
MHD Project File No. 604361

Dear Secretary Pritchard and Mr. Blundo:

WalkBoston appreciates the opportunity to comment on this project during the early phases of project design, and also appreciates the time and in depth information and conversation that your staff and consultants provided at the Beacon Hill Civic Association meeting that I attended last week. We are also pleased that your approach to the bridge design is carefully considering the needs of pedestrians, bicycles (including bike lanes) and universal access in addition to the needs of vehicular traffic and the MBTA. We realize that the constraints of historic preservation and impacts to adjacent parkland mean that the designs must juggle many issues in a very tight space.

Our comments primarily address issues that were not yet incorporated into the plans that were presented at the meeting. When the comments were brought up at the meeting, the MHD and DCR staff and consultants all expressed a willingness to include these items in the next rounds of planning and design for the project. We look forward to their inclusion in the ENF that we understand is to be filed later this summer.

1. Information about traffic, pedestrian and bicycle volumes on the bridge, with estimates of future volumes based on enhanced bicycle and pedestrian conditions and connections to/from city streets and Charles River parkland.
2. Presentation of designs for:
 - Pedestrian connections to/from the bridge (to both the city street networks and Charles River Parkland) in Boston and Cambridge, on both upstream and downstream sides of the Bridge – these designs should include the Charles Circle and Kendall Square areas to ensure that they address the full geographic area that will be affected by changes to the Bridge
 - Roadway intersection design modifications to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety at the connections to/from the bridge in Boston and Cambridge on both the upstream and downstream sides of the Bridge. These might include such elements as: tightened

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curb radii for vehicles; improved sight lines for drivers; wider and well-marked crosswalks that incorporate substantial lighting of pedestrians in the crosswalks so that they are visible to drivers; and improved signage informing drivers that pedestrians are present.

3. Review and assessment of the vehicle design speed for the Bridge. Current driving speed on the Bridge is significantly greater than the posted (or prevailing city street) design speed. Speeds on the Bridge should be brought into line with those on adjacent city streets. Lowering the design speed may create opportunities to provide more generous pedestrian and bicycle accommodation because it could include narrower lanes.
4. Pedestrian and roadway lighting options that left the sidewalk free of light poles were shown at the meeting. We think this is a terrific idea and hope that these options will be incorporated into the final design, and that the level of lighting will encourage year-round use of the bridge.
5. Snow and ice clearance methods for the Bridge should be incorporated into its design. This will require careful consideration of the design of the low wall or fence that separates the sidewalks from the roadway surface. Provision of snow storage areas in the vicinity of the bridge may be needed to insure that as the roadways are plowed they do not result in blocked sidewalks or bicycle lanes.
6. The signal timing plans will be an important element of pedestrian accommodation where the bridge meets the city street networks. We anticipate that the plans will accord with Boston's new signalization policy, and with policies in the City of Cambridge – each of which specifically call for maximizing pedestrian WALK times and ensuring pedestrian safety.

We look forward to the next iteration of plans and conceptual/preliminary designs for the Bridge – and eagerly anticipate significantly improved walking conditions on this beautiful structure that forms a very important part of the Boston and Cambridge pedestrian network.

Very Truly Yours,

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

Cc Commissioner Stephen Burrington, DCR