



WalkBoston

March 22, 2011

Secretary Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston MA 02114
Attn: MEPA Office, Deirdre Buckley

RE: Comments on the Environmental Notification Form, EEA No. 14718
Mystic River Recreational Trail

Dear Secretary Sullivan:

WalkBoston appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Environmental Notification Form for the Mystic River Recreational Trail in Somerville. The project has grown out of the analysis of the Assembly Square development project, which will enlarge and improve the riverside park along the Mystic River. The completion of the new riverside park will result in trails along the south bank of the Mystic for about one mile, reaching from the MBTA rail overpass near the Mystic River Dam to the network of paths that outline part of the Ten Hills neighborhood and along the river to Mystic Valley Parkway (Route 16) in Medford. However, these trails are divided into two discontinuous parts on either side of the Fellsway (Route 28), a heavily traveled roadway which is difficult for pedestrians to cross safely.

The proposal calls for construction of an underpass to accommodate a recreational trail beneath the Mystic River Bridge (Fellsway, Route 28). This underpass would link the Assembly Square development with the Ten Hills neighborhood in Somerville and provide a continuous walkway along the Mystic River. Construction of the underpass will also include some improvements to pathway connections to it on both sides of the Fellsway (Route 28).

WalkBoston fully supports construction of the underpass and welcomes the connections it will provide for walking and bicycling along the Mystic River. The facility will strengthen the Assembly Square development and add a new amenity to other areas near the river. The trail will ultimately be an element in a larger network of trails into and through Assembly Square, and will connect with the proposed station on the Orange Line.

WalkBoston continues to support smooth surfaces on walking routes and in public spaces that serve as pedestrian gathering places and plazas. Brick, granite or concrete pavers create a visually distinctive space but without very careful maintenance these surfaces can quickly become uneven, making for treacherous walking. Such materials are also often difficult to clear of snow during the winter months. Specifications for this project should call for smooth materials leading from both sides onto the wooden deck that constitutes the trail under the bridge. We encourage the selection of smooth walking surfaces wherever possible.

The Assembly Square development is described as a transit-oriented development and we understand that the transit station is being constructed early in the development sequence. The proposed underpass is an integral part of providing good pedestrian connections to the Assembly Square transit station from the Ten Hills neighborhood, and will help to draw pedestrians to the new station.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. Please contact us if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Landman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

Cc Monica R. Lamboy, Executive Director, Somerville Strategic Planning and Community Development,
Jaime Corliss, Director, Shape Up Somerville