

# walk

BY WENDY LANDMAN

## Peds and bikes may lose critical path & bridge network

The Charles River Basin is lined with parks and pedestrian paths from Science Park to Route 128—12 miles away. Lying between the Science Park Dam and Boston Harbor, right near North Station and in the shadow of the Zakim Bridge, is a long-forgotten half-mile. This former industrial area, still crossed by railroad tracks, is currently being transformed into parkland by the Central Artery/Tunnel project.

The long-planned vision for the area centers on pedestrian/bicycle paths on both sides of the Charles River, and a path bridging the river to connect the Cambridge and Esplanade path systems to the Boston Harborwalk and the Rose Kennedy Greenway. WalkBoston has long supported the path plans as critical elements in the emerging regional path network.

To create these connections, the agreed-upon plans specify three bridges along and over the MBTA commuter rail lines. The first bridge (now being designed) will cross the rail tracks to link Charlestown and Cambridge.

The second bridge is to cross over the rails on the

Boston side behind North Station to connect the Esplanade to the Greenway and the Harborwalk. The third bridge crosses the river parallel to the rail lines, on the upstream side of the existing railroad bridge.

The last two bridges may fall prey to budget caps and funding limits. If this happens, the network will be incomplete. Without the second bridge, for example, existing paths will dead-end at each side of the railroad tracks—at the Spaulding Hospital on the west, and the Charles River Dam on the east. Without the third bridge, river crossings for pedestrians and bicycles will be largely diverted to busy roadway bridges.

On **Wednesday, July 13 at noon**, I will lead a walk through the **Lost Half-Mile** to demonstrate the need for these bridges. Join us on Causeway Street in front of the North Station T stop to explore the planned path and bridge locations and their roles in the regional network. All three bridges deserve your support. Join us, agencies and other advocacy groups to see why and how you can help make sure we don't lose this critical ped/bike connection.

BY ANN HERSHFANG

## Making the Greenway walkable: what it still needs

Urban planners, transportation engineers and public officials have spent two decades designing and building the massive Central Artery/Tunnel project, and there is no doubt that fatigue has set in, fostering an urge to just build it and stop agonizing over the details. But officials from the CA/T, the City of Boston and WalkBoston are resisting this inclination to just get on with it, and are instead are working on the details. WalkBoston is pressing to ensure that the finished project creates an outstanding walking environment so that the public will feel its \$15 billion was indeed money well spent. Pedestrian issues that require close monitoring are:

**Sidewalk continuity at 500 Atlantic Avenue:** Plans for the Rose Kennedy Greenway frontage of the new Intercontinental Hotel, now under construction, interrupt the continuous sidewalk. The City of Boston has granted the developer a permit for an 18' 7" vehicle loading/unloading zone which occupies all the sidewalk space and requires pedestrians to circle onto private property behind the building columns and beneath its upper stories, very close to active hotel and condominium entrances. Pedestrians and the disabled will have to negotiate two 4-inch curbs and a row of bollards. Pedestrian sightlines will be compromised by columns at the garage entrance/exit ramps.

This sidewalk proposal does not conform to the letter or spirit of the approved guidelines for the Greenway and will set an unfortunate precedent for subsequent development. There are better alternatives, and we are working intensively with the developer—Intell—and the City to modify this unacceptable design. A continuous 15' 7" sidewalk along the street edge throughout the Greenway corridor has been a CA/T and City commitment for nine years and must be honored.

**Continuous and safe sidewalks:** Information presented at a recent CA/T Environmental Oversight Committee meeting indicated that Greenway developers are proposing as many as 6 curb cuts in a single block. While garage and service access across the sidewalk is needed, the number being permitted is excessive. We will

work with the City to minimize curb cuts and modify permitting processes that violate prior City commitments.

**Pedestrian walk signals:** The City, CA/T and WalkBoston have exhaustively reviewed current CA/T designs for walk signal timing. Unfortunately, many of the signals are timed to move vehicles, not pedestrians. Changes needed are: automatic walk signals parallel to traffic moving on green; generous walk time for peds; and traffic flow timed at a safe speed for pedestrians. Particular problem areas are at transit stations and crossings from downtown to the harbor.

**Safe intersection geometry:** Maintain the intersection geometry that was developed in 1995 by the Surface Transportation Action Forum to serve pedestrian access and slow traffic speeds.

**Smooth walking surfaces:** Install smooth walking surfaces that meet standards for accessibility. Provide for continual maintenance to ensure long-term quality of walking surfaces, especially brick.

**Highway signage appropriate for the urban setting:** Modify interstate signage currently being installed that encourages drivers to speed up on City streets leading to underground highway ramps.

**Completion of the Charles River Basin ped/bike network:** The CA/T is building parks on both banks of the Charles, and WalkBoston is urging it to complete the connections that will provide a continuous pedestrian/bicycle network linking the Esplanade to the Harborwalk despite funding limitations (see companion article above).

WalkBoston has been an advocate for a welcoming and safe walking environment for the Rose Kennedy Greenway since its inception. Through the years much progress has been made and we are proud of our role in that progress. But there is still more to be done. WalkBoston will continue to speak out on issues of concern to fulfill the surface promises and ensure that all of us will enjoy walking along the Rose Kennedy Greenway.

# Boston

MAKING OUR COMMUNITIES  
MORE WALKABLE

SUMMER 2005

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WalkBoston promotes walking for transportation, health and recreation through education and advocacy. Our mission is to create and preserve safe walking environments that build vital communities.

## mission

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## summer walks

Walks are free for members and \$10 for nonmembers. Registration is required. Call the office or check our website for reservations, times and details.

**Sat. July 9, 1pm: Explore the South End Medical District** and the neighborhood's influence in history.

**Wed. July 13, 12 noon: Pedestrians in the Lost Half-Mile: The Charles River Basin** Explore the river banks of Boston and Cambridge behind North Station.

**Mon. July 25, 6pm: Foraging for Food in the Fens** Hunt edibles with expert forager Russ Cohen.

**Wednesdays in August, 12 noon: Lunchtime walk series** Downtown and Back Bay, 1 hr. long. Check web site for details.

## stepping up

WalkBoston thanks Equity Office Properties Trust, a new member, for being the first to work with us in all categories of corporate support: joining as a corporate member, sponsoring our Annual Meeting, and subsidizing a spring 2005 walk that emphasized the short distances between Downtown, the Convention Center, the World Trade Center and Rowes Wharf. Equity is the nation's largest office building owner and manager, with 700 properties and 124 million square feet of office space across the country. Equity Vice President Maryann Gilligan Suydam said, "Equity is proud to be a supporter of WalkBoston. Walking is the principal mode of access to all of our buildings and we need to improve pedestrian facilities and safety throughout the country."

## arts walks

In March, WalkBoston joined with the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau [GBCVB] in getting the National Art Education Assoc. on their feet. The NAEA wanted self-guided walking tours with an arts focus to be part of its national conference at the Hynes Convention Center. WalkBoston proposed the Commonwealth Ave. Mall sculpture walk and the Avenue of the Arts walk [from the Hynes to the MFA], the GBCVB generously funded development of the walk maps. Conference attendees appreciated the maps, especially the one leading to the MFA. After the conference, 4,000 maps were delivered to the GBCVB's information booth at the Prudential Center. All in all, a successful collaboration, and we hope a portent of more walking tour maps to come.

## walkers' blog

At last: a web log—a blog—for us. "Walk to Work" is a new web site celebrating our favorite form of commuting in essays, stories, and poems. The editor is looking for "a variety of experiences, diverse perspectives, and geographic locations," and indeed there are early entries from Minneapolis, Montana, and Moldova. Writers tell how they chat with strangers and dance with cars. Everyone seems to be having a good time.

Just about any walk-to-work topic is welcome, with the only restriction being a limit of 1,000 words per submission. We see Boston area possibilities too numerous to count. Visit the site at [www.walk-to-work.blogspot.com](http://www.walk-to-work.blogspot.com) to pick up submission guidelines and enjoy the writings already posted.

## membership application

Complete this form & mail along with your check made payable to: WalkBoston, Old City Hall, 45 School Street, Boston, MA 02108.  
 T: 617.367.9255 | F: 617.367.9285 | [info@walkboston.org](mailto:info@walkboston.org) | [www.walkboston.org](http://www.walkboston.org)

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check one:  INDIVIDUAL \$30     SUPPORTER \$100—\$499     STROLLER \$1000  
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Your donation is tax deductible as a charitable contribution.

## Measuring in feet

Collecting vehicle traffic volumes is standard practice for transportation agencies. Less common is collecting data on non-motorized traffic, although the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has been doing so since 1975. Now the Institute of Transportation Engineers, through the Alta Planning Group, is collecting pedestrian and bicycle volumes four times per year from participating organizations nationwide. The initial collection took place in mid-May, with help from a contingent of WalkBoston and MassBike volunteers.

30 volunteers counted traffic over three days at 27 locations where significant volume occurs, such as the bridges across the Charles

River and traffic hubs such as Davis Square. Results are always interesting. For example, on May 10, the largest two-hour morning pedestrian volume was 3,441 on Winter Street between Tremont and Washington. The largest morning bicycle volume—302—occurred on the Harvard Bridge. The totals for all locations were 20,822 pedestrians and 2,781 bicyclists. Joggers, roller bladers, wheelchairs, and baby carriages were also counted at some locations.

The collected data help track seasonal variations and will provide a basis for estimating demand. Future collections are planned for this coming July and September, and in January 2006. Volunteers are needed for this critical work. Please help us by contacting [cbucklewis@ctps.org](mailto:cbucklewis@ctps.org).