

10.15

walk 

MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

WalkBoston 25th Anniversary walks make a difference

In celebration of our 25th Anniversary, supporters from across the state took walks. The walks offered people an opportunity to learn more about their neighborhoods and take action to make their streets safer. From kickstarting local advocacy groups to proposing signal, lighting and parking changes our walks did more than draw a crowd—they made a difference!

Dorchester: Codman Academy students & locals focus City on street calming *Maggie Sachs Mahmood*

In 2014, a student was struck and seriously injured on Epping Street, a one-block, one-lane roadway bordering Codman Academy Charter Public School in Dorchester. This was just the most recent in a string of pedestrian and bike accidents on roads near the school.

These accidents sparked students to take action. As part of their physics and math classes, students proposed a project that would analyze the safety of roadways surrounding the school. In the fall of 2014, Codman Academy reached out to WalkBoston's Dorothea Hass and Brendan Kearney to assist the students in compiling data about traffic patterns.

A number of key findings came out of this study. First, students noticed very high traffic volume on Epping Street during student arrival hours [145 per hour]. Speed data for this time revealed faster than expected speeds due to the wide curb radius. Second, the data revealed that most of the cars were using Epping Street as a cut-through to avoid traffic signals. Finally, students found poor visibility at the intersection of Epping and Norfolk Street due to parked cars close to the crosswalk. As a result, the students of Codman Academy and advocates from WalkBoston strongly felt that Epping should be closed and the campus extended across Epping.

With the support of teachers and WalkBoston mentors, four students emerged as spokespersons for the initiative: Ariel Mullings-Bent, Jahdejha Henderson, Love Harrison and Brianna Hollins. They presented their findings at several small community meetings and were invited to present at the State House for the Active Streets, Healthy Families, Equitable Communities event. At the State House, the Director of Policy and Communications at the Massachusetts Public Health Association, Maddie Ribble, aided the students in visiting Senator Linda Dorcena Forry and Representative Dan Hunt to advocate for roadway redesign.

Two students, Ariel and Love, also participated in WalkBoston's 25th Anniversary walk through the Talbot-Norfolk Triangle. The walk began at Ashmont Station, stopped in the historic Ashmont Hill neighborhood, and wound back through Codman Square. As the students spoke on the front steps of Codman Academy, all of their key findings were illustrated in real time: cars whizzed past on Epping Street, failed to stop at the stop sign, and several people walking were observed struggling to cross. The students felt a sense of empowerment through their inclusion in the walk, as they were also introduced to like-minded advocates.

Following the walk, students were invited to Boston City Hall to advocate for reform. Transportation Planner Charlotte Fleetwood coordinated the City Hall meeting attended by Boston Transportation Department [BTD] members Commissioner Gina Fiandaca, Director

of Planning Vineet Gupta, Director of Community Affairs Kevin Donahue, Director of Engineering John DeBenedictis, Project Manager Patrick Hoey and Boston Police Captain John Danilecki. Also present were Dorothea Hass and the Executive Director of Codman Academy Meg Campbell.

The BTD promised to make safety improvements, post a "no parking" sign to increase intersection visibility, step up enforcement of speeding and illegal left turns and connect the school with a crossing guard program. Most notably, the BTD agreed to fund a larger traffic study for the neighborhood to evaluate the benefits and impacts of closing Epping Street to traffic. Without the advocacy of WalkBoston on its side, the major successes of this project thus far would not have been possible.

Worcester: Strengthened relationships to ensure Main St. project works for walkers *Hillary Borcharding*

Forty people joined WalkBoston, WalkBike Worcester, and co-hosts in a walk from Union Station to the Blackstone Tap. Steve Rolle of the City of Worcester kicked off the event by discussing Union Station's transformation into a multimodal facility. At McGrath Boulevard, Heather Gould of Economic Development spoke about streetscape improvements and the Blackstone Valley's Bikeway. Allen Fletcher from the Canal District Alliance spoke of his personal walking route and the joy of getting to know his neighborhood on foot. Finally, the City's Phil Neddrie described Union Hill improvements and the public-private partnerships revitalizing the neighborhood.

Beyond a great event, this was an opportunity to deepen the relationship between advocates and the City. People shared their hunger for a vibrant, walkable North Main Street, which is currently under design for construction. For the past two years, WalkBike Worcester has advocated for fewer vehicle lanes, more room for walking, bike lanes, and safer ways for pedestrians to cross. Thanks to this work, the Worcester walk and the MassDOT Road Safety Audit, MassDOT now recommends a narrower three-vehicle lane option [vs. the current four/two each way]. Indications look favorable that the City will follow this recommendation.

Somerville: Activated the City, East Somerville Main Streets & nearby developers to cultivate a plan to improve the Kensington Underpass pedestrian connection below I-93 *Ken Krause*

Somerville officials and community leaders are proud of the walkable neighborhoods they are nurturing in the Lower Broadway and Assembly Row areas. But they know their work will not be done until people feel as safe and comfortable walking between these neighborhoods as they do walking in them.

Such commitment was evident on April 28 when WalkBoston hosted the first of four community walks across the state as part of its year-long 25th Anniversary celebration. More than 50 Somerville residents, city staff, and representatives of civic organizations turned out to celebrate walkability improvements at these two thriving destinations, but also to explore ways to improve the challenging short walk between them.

While wide sidewalks, generous WALK signal times,

Boston

WALKBOSTON BOARD

Joe Beggan
Betsy Boveroux
Hillary Borcharding
Amy Branger
Nina Cohen
Joyce DiBona
Nina Garfinkle
Paula Gold
Ann Hershfang
Betsy Johnson
Matt Lawlor/president
Erik Lund/counsel
Jerry Pucillo
Bill Reyelt
Greg Rogers/treasurer
Linda Sharpe/vice president
Karen Cord Taylor
Emma Rothfeld Yashar/secretary

CONTACTS/COMMITTEES

executive director
Wendy Landman

staff

Stacey Beuttell
Julie DeMauro
Dorothea Hass
Brendan Kearney
Barbara Maratos
Laura O'Rourke
Robert Sloane

intern

Kasia Hart

advocacy

Interested? This could be YOU!

communications

Nina Garfinkle

development

Emma Rothfeld Yashar

newsletter editor

Hillary Borcharding

WalkBoston 25th Anniversary walks make a difference

continued

new parks and public art make walking on Broadway and at Assembly Row pleasant and inviting, people walking along the popular route in between must cross two busy arteries, McGrath Highway and Mystic Avenue, and a dark, dreary area beneath I-93 known as the Kensington Underpass.

Ideas were plentiful during the WalkBoston walk, which included representatives from East Somerville Main Streets, Somerville Neighborways, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, Friends of the Community Path, Federal Realty and the City.

Among them were signal, sign, and crosswalk improvements on McGrath Highway and Mystic Avenue, and cleaning, brightening and enlivening the space under I-93. In Boston, in a similar space, multi-modal path and art/lighting installations were among improvements made under the Southeast Expressway using the MassDOT InfraSpace program in which public-private partnerships form to improve MassDOT properties.

“Highway underpasses are often wasted and unwelcoming spaces that divide communities, which is why we are working with the community and international design experts to reclaim these public spaces,” said Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone, who nominated Kensington Underpass for the InfraSpace program. “With our goals to become the most walkable, bikeable and transit-accessible city in the country, as well as to add 125 acres of new open space

into our compact 4.1 square miles, we have to get creative, and underpasses offer just the kind of challenge we like to tackle here in Somerville: daunting perhaps—but full of potential.” [Read more at walkboston.org/Kensington]

Springfield: Springfield advocates spurred to start WalkBike Springfield Betsy Johnson

On July 17, over a dozen people celebrated Springfield’s new commitment to walking and bicycling with a one-mile loop walk in the Brightwood neighborhood. The Springfield walk highlighted neighborhood walking issues, including the lack of access to the Connecticut Riverwalk and need to walk on a highway ramp to get to Main Street. At the midway stop at the Pioneer Valley Riverfront Club, walkers heard about Springfield’s newly developed Pedestrian-Bike Complete Streets Plan and its focus on entire city connectivity, the Safe Routes to School programs, including safety audits and Walking School Buses, and the McKnight Railtrail progress. The event inspired people to create a new organization, WalkBike Springfield, that met for the first time in late August.

We thank Springfield Mass in Motion for financial support of the walk. Also co-hosts New North Citizens’ Council, Pioneer Valley Riverfront Club, LiveWell Springfield, Baystate Brightwood Health Center, City of Springfield Dept. of Elder Affairs, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and McKnight Neighborhood Council.

Please donate today!
walkboston.org/donate

9.15 walks = action

Mission

WalkBoston makes walking safer and easier in Massachusetts to encourage better health, a cleaner environment and vibrant communities.

WalkBoston
45 School Street
Boston, MA 02108
T: 617.367.9255
F: 617.367.9285
info@walkboston.org
www.walkboston.org

thank you!

SPONSOR
MASSACHUSETTS
CONVENTION CENTER
AUTHORITY

RACEWALKER

John Hancock

Plymouth Rock
assurance.

PARTNERS
HEALTHCARE

STRIDERS
Eaton Vance
Massport
Robinson & Cole
Trinity Financial
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin

STROLLERS
DLA Piper
Eastern Bank
Edelstein & Company
Eversource
Fay, Spofford & Thorndike
Goulston & Storrs
HMFH Architects

HNTB
Howard/Stein-Hudson
HYM Investment
Microsoft NERD Center
New Balance
Posternak Blankstein
& Lund LLP
The Collaborative

AMBLERS
A Better City
Alta Planning & Design
Architectural Heritage
Foundation
Barrington Wright Assoc.
BETA Group
Beth Israel Deaconess
Medical Center
Boston Society of

Architects
BSC Group
Cecil Group
Cetrulo LLP
CommuterChoice
Copley Wolff Design
CRIA-IBI Group
Crosby, Schlessinger,

Smallridge
East Boston Savings Bank
EF Education First
Finegold, Alexander + Assoc.
Friends of Post Office Square
Halvorson Design
Jacobs Engineering Group
Kittelson & Associates
McDermott Ventures
McMahon Associates
Nitsch Engineering
Parsons Brinckerhoff
Somerville Road Runners
TEC Engineering
Toole Design Group
TranSystems

CONTRIBUTORS
AAA
BR Alexander
Cambridge Traffic, Parking
& Transportation
Federal Realty
Friends of Community Path
Friends of the Public
Garden
LifePlans

events

Mon., Oct. 26, 5:30-7:30pm, Tech & Walkability panel

How can we use technology to improve the walking environment in our communities? Featuring: Elizabeth Christoforetti/Placelet, Tim Fendley/Applied Wayfinding, Chris Osgood/City of Boston Chief of Streets, Caroline Smith/SeeClickFix. Meet: ArnoldWorldwide, 10 Summer St in Downtown Crossing. RSVP: walktechBOS.eventbrite.com

Tues., Nov. 10, 5:30pm — 7pm, Downtown walk and drinks

Stroll with WalkBoston staff and discover “the little lanes” and how downtown Boston is changing and opening new opportunities for walkers. Finish with drinks at Jacob Wirth—the birthplace of WalkBoston.

Tues., Dec. 15, 4:30—6:30pm — 31 Nights of Light 2015

Join us at the Prudential Center for the 5pm ceremony at which the Prudential tower will be illuminated in WalkBoston’s color. A party and Mall Walk will follow. Meet at the Prudential’s Center Court near the customer service desk.

Missed a WalkBoston event? Don’t worry!

WalkBoston’s Storify page allows you to view pictures, learn from special guests, and read tweets from both walkers and presenters. To find a Storify page on each of WalkBoston’s events visit: www.storify.com/WalkBoston.