

BY BOB SLOANE &amp; JENNIFER ARTWOOD BURNLEY

## A “park-and-walk” facility in a small Massachusetts town

The small town of Bolton has developed a plan for safer options for its walkers and bicyclists. One element of the new plan is a unique “park-and-walk” facility where people in this apple-tree town can find ample parking and multiple paths for walking and neighborly socializing.

Lending itself to this new type of facility is a significant cluster of town-owned land at the town center, surrounding its two schools and major recreational fields and adjacent to its senior center. The land was formerly the site of the annual Bolton agricultural fair and is large enough for Bolton residents to take long walks.

Like many towns, Bolton has limited resources. It cannot easily provide walkways along all major roads in the town, which many people would like to see. In 2011, a Mobility Committee examined neighboring towns’ walkway plans and subdivision rules and regulations to identify possibilities, funding sources and legal issues. A Mobility Survey solicited Bolton residents’ thoughts about non-motorized mobility. Finally, a public presentation on walkways was held, with WalkBoston staff and volunteer participation.

The Mobility Survey reached nearly 10% of the town’s 4,148 residents, with 89% of respondents favoring construction of new walkways along all its roads, especially along Main Street [Route 117], to enable safer connections where walkers now face significant dangers. Residents expressed their greatest concerns as being heavy traffic and speeding vehicles.

Based on the survey and the public forum, the committee developed priorities:

- Extension of the existing town center sidewalk along Main Street toward the old fairgrounds.

- Connections between the Regional High School into surrounding neighborhoods and a safe crosswalk in front of the school building.
- Connections to conservation trails, to create larger walking loops.
- Traffic calming measures to control fast-moving vehicles, especially in the town center.
- Wayfinding signage for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Education programs emphasizing pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- Regulatory changes to require walkways along and within all proposed subdivisions.
- Priorities for walkway improvements to be spearheaded by neighborhood petition.

WalkBoston remains involved in Bolton’s walkway planning process, having advised on surveys and follow-up steps on new walkways and recruited two volunteer members who are professional landscape architects to prepare a proposed design for the “park and walk” facility on the former fairgrounds.

BY BOB SLOANE &amp; ELIZABETH HUGHES

## Walkways unite a town

The Town of Boxborough, a community near Route I-495, demonstrates what small towns can do to bring walking facilities to the community. It has already built a 3,000-foot walkway that connects the elementary school, library, town hall, police and fire headquarters, and community center. It includes a \$25,000 bridge over wetlands, built by volunteers and then landscaped by middle-school students. It connects to small businesses and a large housing development. This case study can be found in WalkBoston’s “Rural Walking Toolkit,” available on our website. *continued*

BY NINA COHEN

## Walking vacations still inspire!

Countryside walking vacations were popular when Chaucer’s Canterbury pilgrims set out on their trip, and they still inspire. For regular walkers, it’s hard to pinpoint a favorite walk. Is it Sri Lanka, with its beaches, jungles and tea plantations and superb accommodations? Or Morocco with its Moorish architecture and Atlantic views? Foot travel, especially in rural areas, establishes an intimacy that is unique to a place and rewards perseverance.

Walking trips used to mean backpacking, but now there are many options. Outdoor walking trips supported by public transportation are popular in Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Walkers simply go from inn-to-inn or hut-to-hut, carrying clothes, rain gear, lunch and water. In the US, inn-to-inn hiking is not as well established, although trails leading to backcountry lodges are available in national parks, including the Grand Canyon.

A popular walk across England that was created in 1974 begins at the Irish Sea and ends at the North Sea, traversing England’s Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors. Supported by 2 guides and a driver, National Geographic offers the 170-mile C2C as a 12-day trip with stops along the way for monasteries, castles, fish-n-chips and tea with scones.

A granddaddy in the field of walking tours is the Boston-based Appalachian Mountain Club [AMC]. For 40 years AMC excursions led by trained amateurs have been the best bargain in travel adventures. In mountain regions from the western US and Canada to Europe, New Zealand and South America, AMC trips costing less than \$2,000 [not including airfare] sojourn in California’s Sierra Nevada, Washington’s Cascade Range, New Zealand, Patagonia and Machu Picchu, among other places. AMC also offers hut-to-hut tours in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Tighter budget? Travel books often offer good alternatives.

Walking in the Alps is surprisingly accessible, even for those who don’t speak the language of any of the seven countries forming the Alpine ecosystem: France, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Liechtenstein. Walking routes are well marked and easily accessed using trains and buses. Sturdy stone lodgings shelter and feed walkers [and take reservations online].

Guided trips are a good idea the first time you set off on an extended walk. After you’ve experienced guided group trips, you’ll want to design your own expedition, set off at your pace and let your interests lead you. The world awaits!

# Boston

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## events

### Markey Memorial Ped Bridge Tour

Thurs, Oct. 17th, 5–6:30pm

#### Meet: Revere Beach Station

We'll walk along the beachfront to the footbridge/Wonderland Station. Led by Miguel Rosales, lead Bridge Architect, Pres. of Rosales + Partners.

### Moving Together Conference

Wed, Oct. 23, 7:45am–4 pm

Park Plaza Hotel, Boston

### WalktoberFest

Sat, Oct. 26th, Time: TBD

Grab a stein and join us for our 3rd annual toast to centuries of walking and brewing in Massachusetts.

### Mass. Smart Growth Conference

Wed, Nov. 20th, 8am–5:30pm

Boston Convention & Exhibition Ctr.

## walk talk

### *Solvitur ambulando*

[It is solved by walking].

— *Attributed to St. Augustine, quoted in Paul Theroux, The Tao of Travel*

Walker, there is no road, the road is made by walking.

— *Antonio Machado*

*Spanish poet, 1875-1939*

In your lifetime you will walk about 65,000 miles — that's three times around the earth!

My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was 60. She's 97 now, and we don't know where the hell she is.

— *Ellen DeGeneres*

## favorite rural walks

### Ross Memorial Park

Ross Memorial Park [formerly Cy Tenney Park] on Johnson Road in West Peabody, MA, is one of my favorite walks on the North Shore. The park features plenty of activities, including a scenic walk with three playgrounds and several baseball fields. And, best of all, it is part of the recently built bike path. The park is a short walk from my home and will certainly be a hot spot for my family for many years to come, once my eight-month-old son is old enough to use the playground, ride a bike and, eventually, play ball on the baseball field.

— *Greg Rogers, Peabody resident, CPA, WalkBoston Board Treasurer*

### Country Lanes of Topsfield

River Road, Rowley Bridge Road, Cross Street, Hill Street. Here's a slightly hilly, 3-mile loop on paved roads past woods, fields, and a large farm. Crossing the Ipswich River twice on stone bridges, you glimpse canoes and kayaks navigating the river's bends, ducks holding at the banks. In the cornfields the sun picks out white-tailed deer. A red brick Georgian mansion sits near the river and a 17th-century wooden house is set close to the road. This is semi-rural New England—always beautiful and never the same twice.

— *Alison D'Amario, Topsfield resident, former director of interpretation at the Salem Witch Museum*

## 9.13 rural walks

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

WalkBoston makes

## mission

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## thank you!

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## Walkways unite a town continued

The extension westward involved negotiating with MassDOT to obtain a crosswalk over the highway. The new walkway is located on privately-owned land, and the town worked closely with the landowner and in Town Meetings to acquire the necessary easement. For construction, the town used its own equipment and a paving machine borrowed from Acton.

Currently under design is a 2,400-foot walkway eastward along State Highway 111. Because much of the route is within the highway right-of-way, design of this extension has proved to be more difficult. The chief problem on the eastern extension has been designing a walkway across a wetland and stream. State Highway 111 crosses this stream on an aging culvert. To construct a walkway, the Town determined that a new culvert should be physically separated from the highway culvert, so that a failure of the existing culvert would not affect the walkway. To that end, the town came up with a design for an inverted U-shaped culvert.

When the U-shaped culvert is approved, the town will seek funding through the region's Transportation Improvement Program. Additional funding may come as a gift from the developer of a large housing project. The town is hopeful that it will be scheduled for construction by next year.