

July 18, 2005

Secretary Steve Pritchard  
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs  
Attn: MEPA Office  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Cambridge Discovery Park, EOE #13312  
Draft Environmental Impact Report

Dear Secretary Pritchard,

For 15 years, WalkBoston has been an advocate for pedestrians throughout the Greater Boston area. We work for improved facilities, programs and safety in our region, and offer assistance to other organizations throughout the state.

The proposed redevelopment of the Cambridge Discovery Park will expand the current development from 416,000 square feet of office and research space to up to 820,000 square feet. The site is located about one-half mile from the Alewife MBTA station. We have reviewed the proposal and are providing comments on the project because of the substantial number of people who will be traveling by foot between Alewife Station and the project site.

The projected full build trip generation described in the DEIR presents evidence that the pedestrian environment must be considered as an important element of this project. First, the trip generation projections predict that 2,140 transit trips will be expected upon the project's completion. Thus, approximately 1,100 people each day are expected to walk between Alewife Station and the Cambridge Discovery Park. An additional 318 pedestrian and bicycle trips are expected daily from nearby neighborhoods. Providing a hospitable environment for pedestrians traveling between the project site and Alewife Station will help to ensure that the projected mode share will occur and will help to ensure that employees and visitors to the site feel comfortable making the trip.

Second, the DEIR states that the current number of parking spaces (1,052) will not be increased with the addition of more than 400,000 square feet of office space. We congratulate the proponent on this policy of encouraging employees to travel via transit and less polluting means of transportation. WalkBoston assumes that excellent pedestrian connections between Alewife Station and the Cambridge Discovery Park are a project necessity, and will allow the developer to save on construction of parking spaces. This savings should be sufficient to permit the proponent to fund the construction of attractive and safe pedestrian access.

Options for pedestrian access between this site and the Alewife MBTA station include one primary walk route and two possible park paths. We believe that the

proponent must take financial responsibility for the enhancement of the primary route.

1. The walkway along the existing eastbound off-ramp from Route 2 into the station area will be the primary pedestrian access between the site and Alewife Station. This pedestrian connection is essential, irrespective of what may be constructed inside the Alewife reservation. It must be useable in all weather and in the evening, and will become the principal walking route connecting transit users to the site. Because of the large number of pedestrians needing access between the site and the Alewife MBTA station, we urge the proponent to continue discussions with the state and local agencies to create a spacious (minimum 10 foot width) and safe walkway on this route. This route must be fully lighted for pedestrian use, and must be kept fully cleared of snow. We believe that the proponent must cover the costs of this improvement and its maintenance.
2. A walkway through the wetlands from the site to the eastbound off-ramp close to Alewife Station has been proposed. We have been told that park walkways will not be lighted, reducing their usefulness after dark and in winter. The park walkways may also be perceived as dangerous during certain times of day. However, because this route is 700 feet shorter than the ramp route, we believe that some commuters may choose to use it during some hours and seasons.
3. A third, longer pedestrian route could be via the planned Belmont path with a bridge over the Little River. The design and construction of the Belmont path will be funded with state transportation dollars. We understand that, on the project side of the river - the north bank - no pedestrian connections will be funded by the state. However, if a bridge is built, it would be appropriate to make connections into the site.

All of these routes lead pedestrians through an unsignalized intersection with heavy peak-hour traffic adjacent to the MBTA station. This intersection will be of critical importance to pedestrians. The proponent, working in concert with DCR, the MBTA, and the City of Cambridge, must develop and fund a better plan for pedestrian access through this intersection.

WalkBoston feels strongly that the Project proponent must take a more pro-active role in upgrading the walking environment between Alewife Station and the Cambridge Discovery Park. Without sufficient parking for all employees, tenants of the site will have to rely upon transit in the area and thereby also on pedestrian access. A high quality walking environment will help help the project to reach its necessary transit mode share. In addition, pedestrians accessing this site deserve a safe and pleasant walking experience. Therefore, WalkBoston would like to see the Project proponent undertake the following activities:

1. Continue to work with state and local officials to obtain the best design for a walkway along the eastbound Route 2 off-ramp and provide funding for the facility on this route.
2. Work with the MBTA and other agencies to improve pedestrian crossings of the intersection where the eastbound Route 2 off-ramp meets the Alewife Parkway on-ramp and CambridgePark Place, at the northwest corner of the Alewife Station facility, and provide funding for this improvement.
3. Provide an escort service after 8 PM for pedestrians walking between the site and Alewife Station.
4. Provide snow clearance and maintenance for the sidewalk connections between the buildings and Alewife Station.

WalkBoston sees the potential for the employment site to be served by excellent pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections. However, we believe that without the improvements noted above, the current unpleasant pedestrian environment will deter people from making the trip on transit and foot.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,

Wendy Landman  
Executive Director