



WalkBoston

December 5, 2008

Antonia Pollak
Boston Parks Department
1010 Massachusetts Ave.
3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02118

RE: Draft Report - Franklin Park Transportation and Access Study

Dear Ms. Pollak:

WalkBoston is the Commonwealth's leading advocate for pedestrians and safe walking. We work throughout the state encouraging walking, supporting pedestrian improvements and sponsoring walks. We have extensive experience helping residents and local governments with pedestrian issues, safe routes to schools and safer street crossings and sidewalks.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Report of the Franklin Park Transportation and Access Study. We are commenting because we think there may be ways to further enhance pedestrian safety.

When Franklin Park was designed, the three primary circulation routes were the carriage drives, bridle paths, and pedestrian paths. The circulation systems were almost entirely separate, converging only near the Blue Hill Avenue entrance and at the Valley Gate, with a secondary connection at Ellicott Arch. Over time, the addition of vehicular traffic, wider streets and parking areas have to some degree changed how pedestrians walk inside the park. Elimination of vehicular traffic on many of the streets that lace the park has had the effect of concentrating traffic on fewer thoroughfares and has been accompanied by higher traffic speeds on those roads.

General increases in traffic have been accompanied by the practice of people arriving at the park by car, parking along the roadways, and then walking to their destinations in the road because there are no nearby paths or sidewalks. This is not safe for people on foot, in vehicles or on bicycles.

The Transportation and Access Study recommendations include a number of pedestrian safety improvements among the long-term goals for the Park, but WalkBoston believes that low cost pedestrian safety improvements to remedy dangerous conditions at intersections and elsewhere should be built as part of the first phase of construction. Among the improvements that should be considered for the earliest possible implementation are:

- Construction of a simple asphalt path along Circuit Drive to serve people who park along the road. This construction can be implemented prior to the complete rebuilding of the street, and would not replace the need for more major improvements.

- Provision of immediate safety improvements to the Peabody Circle area where a vast space is given to moving traffic and pedestrian access across the space is confusing and unsafe. As the report says, “The excessive pavement on this roadway puts pedestrians at a high level of exposure when crossing the roadway.”
- Add crosswalk warning signs and “Yield to Pedestrian” signs to slow and warn traffic at crosswalks and in all locations where pedestrians are expected to cross streets.
- Repaint crosswalks both inside the park and on the approaches to it.
- Add “yield” lines to upstream travel lanes to warn drivers of crosswalks.
- To slow traffic, narrow travel lanes to 11’ within the 41’ right-of way and use the remaining width for two 5’ bicycle lanes and one 9’ parking lane.
- Provide pedestrian pathways alongside multi-purpose paths where possible.
- Provide signs to indicate which pedestrian ways can be used by wheelchairs or other assisting wheeled vehicles.
- Institute maintenance efforts to assure retention of the benefits of these improvements.

Transit facilities

In addition to the immediate need for the safety improvements listed above, transit users (who are by definition pedestrians) would benefit from the following improvements.

- Add bus shelters throughout the park, using the city’s approach that uses private funding for construction and maintenance for the shelters.
- Provide painted crosswalks at all bus stops, because pedestrians will be crossing the street at these locations.
- Add Franklin Park to the list of stops on the MBTA bus routes. This should be straightforward, as the MBTA frequently updates its schedules and routes and should be able to accommodate this change.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. We look forward to working with and you and welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Bob Sloane
Senior Project Manager

Cc: Guy Busa, Howard/Stein-Hudson
Joe Sanclemente, Howard/Stein-Hudson