

January 19, 2005

Robert M. Varney
Regional Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Suite 1100
One Congress Street
Boston, MA 02114-2023

Michael Mulhern
General Manager
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02115

Dear Mr. Varney and Mr. Mulhern:

WalkBoston has reviewed the work being done on a proposed riverfront path at the MBTA's Charlestown bus garage facility. We are concerned that the February 5, 2005 deadline imposed by the EPA for a settlement for a new walkway is fast approaching and urge both the EPA and the MBTA to hold fast to the solution laid out in the Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) description.

The MBTA was fined by EPA in 2003 for (among other things) pollution in the Mystic River. As part of the settlement, the MBTA agreed to "donate or place a conservation easement on at least one acre of MBTA property so that the Mystic River Path may be extended...to Route 99 in Boston." We note that the MBTA was asked for an easement and was not asked to fund a feasibility study for the path or to fund design and construction of the path. As reported in the draft minutes of the September 30, 2004 Massachusetts Office of Transportation Planning, Trails and Greenways Task Force meeting, the Department of Conservation and Recreation stated that "\$25,000 had been provided to explore potential access along the river adjacent to the MBTA's maintenance facility, in order to access Route 99 and the Sullivan Square area."

This Mystic River Path extension is particularly important because it establishes a link between Somerville's existing riverside walks in Assembly Square and Draw Seven Park, and the sections of the Harborwalk already existing in Charlestown. It connects paths that fan out into Everett, Somerville and Medford on both north and south riverbanks via the planned connection over the Amelia Earhart Dam. Ultimately the path will become part of a network that connects river-to-river between the Mystic and Charles Rivers.

The proposed MBTA action will facilitate dramatic improvements planned for the next 10 years in an area once only used by industry. Residential development is now proposed for parcels along the Mystic River in Somerville, Medford and

Everett. By its actions, the MBTA could help create a significant public place on the riverfront and a transportation link at the same time.

The SEP allows for an alternate route for the path if the EPA agrees in writing. We urge that the EPA not substitute a different route before feasibility of the proposed riverfront route has been examined in detail. The river's edge is unique, and the sweeping vistas of the Mystic River and Boston Harbor cannot be replicated elsewhere. No alternative routing would preserve the riverfront for public use.

We urge you to give a high priority to preserving the riverfront route envisioned in the EPA/MBTA settlement. We hope you will reach final judgment based on a thorough examination of the feasibility of the path, along with a preliminary assignment of agency responsibilities for planning and constructing the facility.

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

cc: Hon. Thomas Menino, Mayor, City of Boston
Hon. Joseph Curtatone, Mayor, City of Somerville
Hon. David Ragucci, Mayor, City of Everett
Congressman Michael Capuano
Senator Jarrett Barrios
Representative Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.
Kathy Abbott, Commissioner, DCR
Steve Burrington, Office of Commonwealth Development
Lauren DiLorenzo, City of Medford Community Development
Janet Kovner, Mystic River Watershed Association
Vivian Li, Boston Harbor Association
Patrick Johnston, City of Everett Police Marine Division
Michael Cocorocchio, City of Everett
Dan Driscoll, Division of Urban Parks and Recreation, DCR
Steve Winslow, City of Somerville Bicycle/Pedestrian Program
Ken Krause and Rob Mela, Medford Bipedes
Mary Werowinski, Friends of the Mystic River