



WalkBoston

September 15, 2008

Secretary Ian Bowles
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114
Attn: MEPA Office, Deirdre Buckley, MEPA Analyst

RE: Comments on the Neponset River Reservation Master Plan Phase II
Environmental Notification Form
MEPA # 14194

Dear Secretary Bowles:

WalkBoston greets the current ENF for Phase II of the Neponset River Reservation with enthusiasm. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the project.

This work on the Neponset River Reservation builds on the completion of Phase I – a 750-acre park of marshes and uplands at the estuary of the Neponset River with a 2.4-mile Lower Neponset River Trail between the Harbor and Central Avenue.

Phase II includes the remainder of the riverbanks, from Central Avenue to Fowl Meadow near Route 128. Phase IIA focuses on two “destination” parks – at Martini Shell and at Mattapan Square – linked by an 8 ft wide, 2.8 mile long multi-purpose trail. Both destination parks will have new benches and overlooks to allow for viewing of the river at several scenic locations and new pedestrian ways leading to playing fields and courts. The new trail will not be totally continuous: in a portion of the route lined by residences and commercial uses between Dana Avenue and Fairmount Avenue in Hyde Park, existing sidewalks provide the necessary links.

We have several concerns about the project:

- Phase I of the River Master Plan does not connect physically with Phase IIA and the only connection of the two segments of the river paths will be via city streets. We hope that work on the intervening segment and local agreement will happen soon to allow for completion of the walking route.
- The route is principally constructed within the right of way of Truman Highway/Brush Hill Road, making it a sidewalk that is very much a part of the streetscape. It would be desirable if more of the route could be provided with more of a landscaped buffer between the path and the roadway to enhance the walking experience.
- Very few crosswalks are indicated on the plans. Neighborhood access depends on safe access to the trail at many locations along the route. All potential access points deserve crosswalks.

- Additional benches for walkers along the route would make the experience more pleasant by affording places to pause while walking.
- Additional riverfront walkways and overlook locations away from the street would be helpful, so that walkers can more fully appreciate the river, otherwise largely invisible along the route.
- Existing sidewalks become a critical link in the trail between Dana Avenue and a point just north of Fairmount Avenue. It would be useful to know what the long-range plan for this segment will be.

The plan has been devised to save the Truman Parkway/Brush Hill Road boulevard layout from major change. The plan also saves many existing trees, while also permitting selective clearing of trees to provide views of the river. We think those goals have largely been achieved.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this exciting project. Please let us know if there are further details we might provide.

Sincerely,

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

Robert Sloane
Senior Planner