



# walkBoston

January 3, 2009

Secretary Ian A. Bowles  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs  
Attn: MEPA Office, Deidre Buckley  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Chairman Marc Garrett  
Plymouth Planning Board  
Plymouth Town Hall  
11 Lincoln Street  
Plymouth MA, 02360

RE: Comments on the Expanded Environmental Notification Form for Plymouth Rock Studios  
in Plymouth  
EOEA # 14345

Dear Mr. Bowles & Mr. Garrett,

WalkBoston appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Expanded Environmental Notification Form for Plymouth Rock Studios (PRS) in Plymouth. We applaud the developer for proposing extensive on site pedestrian circulation. PRS has the potential to be an important economic engine for the lower South Shore region.

While the PRS proposal provides a number of pedestrian facilities, some changes to the design could further improve the pedestrian experience.

1. Greater attention to the needs of pedestrians could be given to the Studio Amenities Zone. This particular area of the site is very auto-oriented, and it would benefit walkers if the buildings were closer together and linked with sidewalks, and all sidewalks should be directly tied into the site's recreation paths.
2. The recreation path along the project's new access drive crosses and re-crosses the roadway. While these crossings are provided via bridges to avoid conflicts, a pathway that stays to the west of the access drive seems to be more straightforward. Although wetland B is close to the roadway, given the available buffer area, the recreation pathway could be designed to hug the west side of the roadway.
3. Pedestrian access to the bungalow housing units could be improved by adding a paved path to connect the cul-de-sac to the recreation pathway and the access drive/ring road.
4. Pedestrian access near the ten single-family home sites on Long Pond Road could be improved by adding a wooded walking trail.
5. The applicant should explore making a short off-site trail connection to the west, connecting the PRS Campus to Bump Rock Road.
6. The applicant should explore making better use of the existing shared use path that is being retained in the Studio Amenities Zone by integrating it and connecting it to the

proposed recreation paths as a looped walking or jogging route for use by the residents of PRS.

7. The existence of a Zone I Aquifer and associated buffer should not prohibit the enhancement of this existing shared use path, perhaps using permeable paving. MassDEP permits passive recreation uses within Zone I, such as walking, jogging or bicycling.
8. The proposed recreation path will connect to existing hiking trails on the adjacent town-owned conservation land. The applicant should be asked to provide additional details on how these pedestrian amenities interconnect and complement each other.
9. Most of the pedestrian trips made daily on the PRS campus will not be able to take advantage of the full pedestrian network. Assuming a majority of the 4,190 proposed parking spaces experience daily turnover, at least 2,000 pedestrian trips a day will be made between parking lots and structures and the various buildings on the PRS campus. Given the propensity for pedestrian and auto conflicts in the loosely-structured driving situations that parking lots provide, and the large number of foot trips that PRS drivers make in accessing their cars, we believe it is paramount for pedestrian safety that a footpath system be established throughout the parking lots. The provision of sidewalks and designated walkways through the parking areas, signage and directional markings, could be combined with the required parking lot plantings that are designed to reduce the heat island effect.

The PRS proposal includes amenities and offers some attractive mitigation that will enhance the pedestrian experience. We trust that the Secretary's certificate and local project approvals will condition these improvements to ensure that they are built. We recommend that the following proposed improvements and mitigation be conditioned in project approvals:

- a. Proposed traffic calming along the area of Long Pond Road, north of Clark Road. At this time, only a commitment to explore such work exists. Traffic calming along this stretch of Long Pond Road will ultimately be very important for the pedestrian experience, as the measured 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds in this location were well above the speed limit.
- b. The proposed modern roundabout at the intersection of Clark Road and Long Pond Road. Although it was not included with the Expanded ENF, (and is proposed by others), its existence is critical to the local roadway system if PRS is to be built. The project proponent should ensure that pedestrians and bicyclists are very carefully considered in the design of the new roundabout and all sidewalks and paths leading to it.
- c. Pedestrian crossings where the project's new access road meets Clark Road. Pedestrians traveling along Clark Road and crossing the project's signalized multi-lane access drive should be able to walk safely and efficiently. The project's roadway and turning lanes should be kept to minimal widths where they intersect Clark Road.
- d. Sidewalks along all internal roadways. These sidewalks, as proposed on page 6-101 of the Expanded ENF, are an important pedestrian amenity and their installation is essential.
- e. Details on the placement and type of bicycle accommodations, including weather protected secure storage locations. The installation of bicycle improvements is essential, and would be in keeping with the proponent's proposed credits in the LEED Project-Wide Credit Summary, Table 5.2.1 of the Expanded ENF.
- f. The recreation path from Clark Road, past the Plymouth South School Complex and through the project will provide a significant amenity as proposed, and could connect

through the Crosswind Golf Club to Forges Field Recreational Complex, helping to realize the vision for the “Wishbone Trail” in the Plymouth Open Space Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the PRS Enhanced Environmental Notification Form. We look forward to seeing the next phase of project design and permitting submissions.

Please feel free to contact us for clarification or additional comments.

Sincerely,

Wendy Landman  
Executive Director

Robert Sloane  
Senior Planner