



walkBoston

September 28, 2007

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

RE: Comments on Taunton High School and Parker Middle School Additions and Renovations/New Pole Elementary School Environmental Notification Form

EOEA # 14099

Dear Mr. Bowles:

We have reviewed the ENF for the proposed project at the site of the existing Taunton High School. The 105-acre site includes the existing High School and Parker Middle School Building. The proposal calls for renovation and additions to the existing buildings and the addition of the new Pole Elementary School. When completed, the High School/Middle School building will have 3200 students and 660 staff and the Pole Elementary School will have 770 students and 87 staff. We are pleased that the city is making investments in this relatively centrally located facility that can be accessed on foot by many students.

We received detailed site plans from the proponent, showing facilities for walking – sidewalks, paths and plazas at the entrance to major facilities. We were impressed that new pedestrian access to the renovated High School/Middle School is a major portion of the renovation plan. In particular there are plazas at the main entrances and sidewalks extending out to the frontage on Williams Street and on Hon. Gordon M. Owen Riverway. Sidewalks surround the new “green” and line the loop road in front of the building. Access from parking lots into the main entrances connect to these walkways.

We do not know from the ENF if pedestrian access off-site is included and hope that the city will make an effort to address off-site issues. The site is about a mile from the center of the city. Its central location suggests that it is accessible by walking for many students. Sidewalks along Williams Street and Owen Riverway already exist and some are being rebuilt as part of this project. Encouraging walkers may require special attention to crosswalks and pedestrian countdown crossing signals, for example, at the intersection of Williams Street and Owen Riverway.

On the site, we suggest that the plans be reviewed to assure that crosswalks are available in all principal pedestrian activity areas. The plans are a bit unclear about pedestrian access to tennis courts, playing fields and the stadium. While we hope that students will be discouraged from driving if they are within walking distance of the school, we also hope that the site improvements will ensure the safety of people who do drive. We note that the major parking area near the school entrance has sidewalks along each edge, and suggest that

marked walkways across the parking areas be considered as an added safety feature for students. The principal parking area near the main entrance to the High School has only indirect pedestrian facilities. As a result, many walkers will cross diagonally on the lawn, a situation that could be remedied by installation of a diagonal walkway. We also suggest that sidewalks be provided between the High School/Middle School and other buildings on the site, such as the skating rink.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this ENF.

Sincerely,

Robert Sloane
Senior Planner