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Dear Transportation Leaders:

We write to you with regard to one of Boston's most iconic structures and pre-eminent transportation facilities, the Longfellow Bridge. As the state embarks on the expensive and lengthy process of rebuilding the Longfellow Bridge, we believe that the time is ripe to think about how its reconstruction fits into the future of metro Boston's urban transportation network for its expected lifetime of 75 years. To that end, we would like to see an enhanced focus on the bridge as part of a multi-modal system that provides excellent transit, pedestrian and bicycle access and begins to reduce the focus on private vehicles, while respecting the critical importance of conserving the best architectural and engineering heritage of the past. Such an approach, which is imperative to address the health, climate change, sustainability and energy crises we now face, is now framing federal transportation, environmental and livable communities policies. We are absolutely committed to working with federal, state and local agencies to make sure that the re-construction proceeds cooperatively and with all due speed.

We are pleased that MassDOT has advertised the early action contract for reconstructive measures. We look forward to seeing the plans for ADA-compliant pedestrian and bicycle accommodation that are included in that early action package and appreciate the time, energy and flexibility of MassHighway in making those early action improvements feasible. We look forward to meeting with you soon to discuss construction schedule and sequencing, logistics, etc. as they relate to impacts on transit users, pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers.

With respect to the long-term design of the bridge, we have carefully considered how the needs of all bridge users can be accommodated by a safe and appropriate assignment of the existing bridge footprint. We suggest that the preferred option include the elements described below, all of which can be provided within the existing bridge footprint without moving existing walls.

1. Because of the preponderance of transit trips over the bridge (estimated by the MBTA at 100,000 trips/day representing more than 70% of all trips), safety for transit passengers and MBTA employees is uppermost. The design must have adequate clearance from the MBTA tracks to provide safety for transit workers and emergency evacuations. Recent design requirements for the Orange Line at Assembly Square called for a minimum of 8.5 feet from the track centerline.
2. Pedestrians must have ample sidewalks (12 feet **clear** width is adequate and 15 feet clear width is desirable) to meet the needs of walkers and runners using the bridge sidewalks which are part of a network of regional-

scale walking routes (the Esplanade, Cambridge Street, Main Street) and to meet the goals of the MHD Project Development and Design Guide. Wider sidewalks would allow the bridge to serve its open space and tourism potential. Lights and their supporting poles should not be located within the clear width of the sidewalk.

3. Vehicles should have one travel lane in each direction, with two lanes provided for the inbound approach to Charles Circle. The roadway capacity additions recently provided by the Big Dig resulted in a total of 14 interstate traffic lanes where 6 existed previously. This new capacity for vehicles may be contributing to diversions from the Longfellow Bridge, where traffic volumes have been declining over the past decade. Based on our review of comparable Massachusetts roadways, the traffic volumes carried by the Longfellow Bridge will be adequately served with this configuration of lanes.
4. Bicycle lanes must be at least 6 ft wide, and should be provided the maximum possible separation from the travel lane. On sections of the bridge with a single travel lane, the bicycling zone will also serve the function of a breakdown lane for disabled vehicles and emergency vehicles. The amount of space needed to serve the breakdown lane function provides the opportunity to separate the bike lane from the travel lane by a painted buffer at minimum.
5. Emergency vehicles must be accommodated by providing the space for them to pass other vehicles on single-lane sections of the bridge. This can be accomplished by allowing emergency use of the combined width of the vehicle lane, the shoulder next to the MBTA fence, the bicycle lane and the bicycle/vehicle buffer.

This preferred option represents the very best of context-sensitive design and meets the principles of both the MA Transportation Reform Act of 2009 and the federal DOT/HUD/EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities. By moving forward with this option, MassDOT will expedite the re-construction of the bridge AND begin moving Massachusetts toward a sustainable and livable transportation system.

In addition to our commitment to working with MassDOT and FHWA on these immediate Longfellow Bridge design choices, we look forward to working with MassDOT, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the cities of Boston and Cambridge to identify design solutions that will provide the Longfellow Bridge and other Charles River Basin bridges with safe convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to the Esplanade and to the street networks of Boston and Cambridge.

If you have any questions about our comments, please contact us via Wendy Landman at WalkBoston: 617-367-9255 or [wlandman@walkboston.org](mailto:wlandman@walkboston.org) We look forward to working with all of you to make the Longfellow Bridge an exemplar of sustainable, multi-modal and handsome 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure.

Best regards,

Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation  
Chris Hart, Institute for Human Centered Design  
Charlie Denison, LivableStreets  
David Watson, MassBike  
Wendy Landman, WalkBoston

Cc Representative Marty Walz  
Representative Tim Toomey  
Representative Will Brownsburger  
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