

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Commissioner Sullivan, engineers, and staff  
DATE: October 14, 2008  
FROM: Charlie Denison, Jackie Douglas, Steve Miller – LivableStreets Alliance  
SUBJECT: BU Bridge Reconstruction

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LivableStreets was invited by DCR to meet with Commissioner Sullivan, engineers, and other staff on October 15, 2008 to discuss the upcoming BU Bridge reconstruction project. Outlined below are a number of ideas and recommendations for improving pedestrian and bicycle access to the bridge, connecting roadways, and Charles River Paths at either end.

First, improvements that could be made for minimal additional cost to the project:

- **Improve the crossing of the Charles River Path on the Cambridge end.** This could include removing the free right turn onto eastbound Memorial Drive, reducing the turn radii for vehicles entering and exiting the bridge, expanding the sidewalk/path, widening the crosswalk and marking it more clearly, and adding countdown crossing signals.
- **Add bike lanes to the bridge roadway.** This could be done by *reducing the number of travel lanes from 4 to 3* and *coordinating the traffic signals* at either end to ensure optimal throughput. Bike lanes would provide a safe and comfortable space for bicyclists who already use the roadway, as well as entice bicyclists who would like to use the roadway but don't, alleviating conflict between bicyclists and pedestrians on the sidewalks. Various 3-lane configurations could be evaluated and tested during the reconstruction itself.
- **Improve the rotary on the Cambridge end for pedestrians and bicyclists.** This could be done inexpensively by simply making crosswalks wider and more visible and adding appropriate warning signage to motorists to yield to pedestrians. In addition, more clearly marking lanes would add more predictability for all users. A longer term goal should be to reduce the amount of pavement in the rotary and approaches, with the goal to calm traffic and reduce speeds.

- **Improve the pedestrian crossing on the Boston end.** Although some improvement has already been made in conjunction with the Commonwealth Ave reconstruction project for part of the crossing, additional improvements should be made to make the remainder of the crossing safer.

Next, more extensive improvements that should also be considered, most likely for additional expense:

- **Add pedestrian overlooks to the bridge and/or widen the sidewalks with cantilevers.** This would allow for better pedestrian access, as well as provide more space for people to enjoy views of the parkland and the city.
- **Construct a new riverfront path on the Cambridge end.** This path would go under the bridge on a boardwalk, similar to the path on the Boston end, allowing many path users to not have to cross the roadway. (Improvements to the roadway crossing should also still be made.)
- **Make additional connections to the Charles River Path on the Boston end.** This could involve building a connection from the bridge directly to the path. (Currently, a rather windy and circuitous connection on Comm Ave and through the BU campus is the only way to get from the bridge to the path.)
- **Construct a path along the abandoned half of the Grand Junction Railroad Bridge** to connect the Charles River Path on the Cambridge end to the path on the Boston end.

Many of these suggestions, as well as others that we have not mentioned, are also mentioned in the 2002 Charles River Basin Master Plan, which we hope you will also refer to when determining what improvements to make. Many of these suggestions also come with the support of other advocacy organizations such as MassBike, WalkBoston, and the Charles River Conservancy.

It is our opinion that an opportunity like this will not come again soon, so it is therefore imperative that improvements for all modes of travel are made as part of this project.