LivableStreets Rethinking urban transportation

LivableStreets Alliance 70 Pacific St. / @Sidney Cambridge MA 02139 T: 617.621.1746 F: 617.716.2085 info@livablestreets.info livablestreets.info

July 10, 2011

Thomas F. Broderick, P.E.
Acting Chief Engineer
MassDOT – Highway Division
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116-3973

Delivery by Adobe PDF via email to thomas.f.broderick@dot.state.ma.us

Subject: Reconstruction of Route 6 & 28, Wareham (Project No. 117106)

Dear Mr. Broderick:

We would like to take this opportunity to provide some suggestions and comments regarding the Reconstruction of Route 6 & 28 Project in Wareham, MA (Project No. 117106), in particular regarding the roadway cross section.

As with all MassDOT projects, we are pleased that MassDOT is making efforts to accommodate both bicyclists and motorists within the curb to curb cross section. 4' shoulders as currently proposed are indeed an improvement over current conditions. However, we strongly feel that the proposed cross section does not do enough to properly accommodate and encourage bicycling along this corridor.

LivableStreets would like MassDOT to include 5' minimum striped bicycle lanes in this project, for a number of reasons. First and foremost, "Bicycle lanes are generally considered the preferred treatment for bicycle accommodation." (MassDOT Design Guidebook, Section 5.3.2.1). Second, well designed bike lanes do more to help guide and encourage bicycling along a roadway, especially since unlike shoulders often do, bicycle lanes continue up to and sometimes through intersections, and in particular guide bicyclists between a through lane a right-turn-only lane. Without bicycle lanes, dealing with intersections can be very stressful and intimidating, especially for novice bicyclists. Furthermore, bike lanes help motorists better predict where bicyclists will be riding. Finally, Route 6 & 28 is a highly trafficked roadway that currently feels very highway-like as currently designed. Bicycle lanes will help make it clear that the roadway is for more than just cars.

The current curb to curb cross-section for this project has two 12' lanes and a 4' shoulder in each direction. This cross-section could be easily adjusted to have two 11' lanes and a 5' bike lane with a 1' buffer between the outside travel lane and the

bike lane or two 11.5' lanes and a 5' bike lane in each direction. This not only will help to better accommodate bicyclists, but will also help to encourage motorists to travel at speeds closer to the speed limit than wider 12' lanes would.

If MassDOT decides that bicycle lanes are not desirable in this location, then we ask that you stripe the roadway as we proposed above, but simply omit the bicycle lane stencils and arrows. This would provide many of the same benefits of bike lanes, and would easily allow them to be upgraded in the future via the painting of bike lane stencils and arrows. An example of this treatment is Cambridge St in Cambridge, where bike lanes have been striped between the parking lane and travel lane (and continue up to and through intersections as bike lanes would), but does not have bike lane stencils and arrows marked. This should be a last resort, however, since the bicycle lane stencils and markings have been shown to be very effective to encourage people to bicycle on a roadway as well as to notify to motorists that bicyclists are welcome and should be expected on the roadway.

We recognize that there are not bicycle lanes on other segments of this roadway, but as we have seen in Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, and other cities in Massachusetts, adding bike lanes along one segment of a roadway at a time is not uncommon at all. You have to start somewhere!

As a final note, we hope that MassDOT will reduce the curb radii at intersections to help increase pedestrian safety by slowing turning traffic to the extent possible, and design driveway entrances and exits to promote maximum pedestrian safety.

Thank you for considering our input as this project moves forward. If you have any questions on the above comments and suggestions, please contact Charlie Denison, Advocacy Director, LivableStreets Alliance, who may be reached at 617.852.6125 and charlie@livablestreets.info.

Sincerely,

Charlie Denison

Charlie Denison
Advocacy Director

CC:
Thomas DiPaolo, Assistant Chief Engineer, MassDOT
Lou Rabito, Bicycle/Pedestrian Engineer, MassDOT