

7 May 2008

Commissioner Rick Sullivan
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston MA 02114

Re: BU Bridge Sidewalk Reconstruction

Dear Commissioner Sullivan:

LivableStreets would like to take this opportunity to comment on the BU Bridge sidewalk reconstruction project that is about to begin. We are excited to learn that the sidewalks along the bridge will be repaired, as they are in poor condition in many places, and serve significant number of pedestrians and bicyclists on a daily basis. In addition to simply reconstructing the existing sidewalks and putting them back in exactly the same configuration, we suggest you take this opportunity to make other much-needed improvements to the bridge that could be implemented at relatively low additional cost. The BU Bridge has great potential to better serve pedestrians and bicyclists, and we feel that the opportunity to incorporate additional improvements should not be neglected. Following are our recommendations:

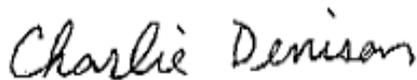
1. **Change the lane configuration from 4 lanes to 3 lanes plus bike lanes.** (During sidewalk reconstruction, the lane configuration could be changed to 2 lanes plus bike lanes.) This would better serve bicyclists who currently ride in the roadway as well as encourage bicyclists who use the sidewalk to use the roadway, alleviating conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists on the sidewalks. If a 2-lane cross-section during construction is infeasible due to traffic reasons, we suggest using the 3-lane cross-section to assess how well the bridge would function with a permanent 3-lane + bike lanes cross-section after construction.
2. **Improve the Charles River Path crossing on the Cambridge side of the bridge.** The path along the Cambridge side of the Charles River is very heavily used by both pedestrians and bicyclists, yet it is quite narrow and forces users to cross many lanes of fast-moving traffic. To improve this crossing, we suggest:

- Widen the path/sidewalk as it approaches the BU Bridge from either direction, especially on the eastern side as it curves along the Memorial Drive eastbound on-ramp.
 - Remove the “pork-chop” island for northbound traffic turning right onto Memorial Drive, instead forcing motorists to make closer to a 90 degree turn. This would allow for a wider path/sidewalk and force vehicles to come to a full stop to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to cross on the red traffic signal. The current free-right turn lane at this location is dangerous because of the speed at which vehicles approach, the very limited space for pedestrians and bicyclists to wait on either the sidewalk or the island, and the fact that northbound bicyclists who want to cross to the island have to look 180 degrees over their shoulder to spot approaching traffic.
 - Widen the crosswalk and stripe it with “zebra-striping” to make it more visible to motorists.
3. **Improve Bicycle accommodation at Boston approach.** In April 2006, LivableStreets recommended adding a bicycle lane starting at the curb-cut going through the Comm. Ave. intersection. You can view a conceptual sketch of this recommendation using this URL:
http://livablestreets.info/files/proposed_v1_29apr06.pdf
4. **Coordinate DCR-controlled signals with Cambridge and Boston signals.** Improving traffic throughput with signal timing would help offset the effects of the reduction of lanes needed in order to add bike lanes.
5. **Cambridge Rotary improvements.** The rotary needs to be made more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. This could be done by reducing the amount of pavement, striping lane markings and bike lanes, making crosswalks more visible through striping and signage, etc.

We realize that this extends the scope of the current project, but believe that the tremendous benefits of these changes will far outweigh the relatively minimal additional cost to the project. We also apologize for writing this letter at such a late phase in your design process, but we had no knowledge of the project until the signs indicating the pending construction were posted about a week ago at the bridge. We would like to be collaborators with you in this project, and hope you will recognize the benefits of engaging the advocacy community in helping to make this as best a project as it can be given the constraints at hand.

Please contact us at your earliest convenience to discuss. I can be reached at charlie@livablestreets.info or (413) 478-9058.

Sincerely,



Charles Denison
Board of Directors, LivableStreets Alliance

cc: Ian Bowles, Wendy Stern, Luisa Paiewonsky, Thomas Tinlin, Clippinger Sue, Wendy Landman, Christopher Hart, Chris Porter, Renata Von Tscharnier