

August 22, 2010

Secretary Ray LaHood
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Support for TIGER II Application, The Somerville Community Path Extension Along MBTA Green Line Extension

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On behalf of LivableStreets Alliance, I am writing to express wholehearted support for the City of Somerville's TIGER II grant application to help fund the extension of the Community Path from Somerville to Cambridge and the Charles River. We have been collaborating with The Friends of the Community Path and the City for many years in advocating for more and better non-motorized transportation choices, particularly combined with the Green Line Extension.

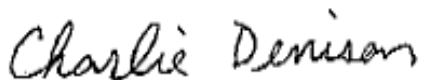
There are numerous important reasons why the construction of this crucial project should be funded at this time.

- The Community Path will provide necessary and pleasant bicycle and pedestrian access from the neighborhoods to 4 of the 7 new light-rail stations for the Green Line Extension, which was intentionally planned to not include parking structures at the stations. The Path is therefore integral to the Green Line extension and will provide the most environmentally sound and cost-effective way to increase transit ridership.
- The Green Line light rail extension is being designed now and will begin construction next year for its 2015 opening deadline. Because it shares the same corridor and much infrastructure, the Community Path extension should be designed and built with the Green Line Extension (GLX). However, sufficient funding has not been identified to construct the Community Path to create this multi-modal transit corridor. It will cost much more to finish the Path construction at a later date.
- The Somerville Community Path extension is the crucial link in the off-street network of bicycle and pedestrian greenways the Boston metropolitan area. This 2.5-mile link will connect the spectacularly popular 13-mile Minuteman Bikeway, which connects with dozens of additional miles of other multi-use trails to the west and northwest of Boston, directly to Downtown Boston.

- The Community Path is the eastern end of the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT), the 104 mile proposed (and partially built) bicycle and pedestrian east-west corridor between Boston and Northampton. This will dramatically increase opportunities for bicycle tourism through all of these cities and towns.
- This proposed Path meets LaHood objectives, promoting clean energy, curbing greenhouse gas emissions, and cutting energy costs, helping with ADA compliance and accessibility, boosting area business and tourist economies, and providing desirable Path access to the Green Line and the region from Somerville's Environmental Justice neighborhoods.
- Compared to many other proposed multi-use trails that have opposition, the extension of the Community Path is universally supported; meaning that if funded, it will be built.
- The Community Path is guaranteed to be a success as it is in Davis Square in Somerville, where > 60% of the residents use public transportation (the MBTA's Red Line stops here) and thousands walk and bike to the station each day along the Community Path.
- The Community Path and Green Line extensions will pass near 6 Somerville public schools and two Somerville public libraries. The Path will create safe, active routes to schools with good air quality, helping to fight the epidemics of childhood obesity and asthma.
- Funding of the Community Path Extension is consistent with DOT's new Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations, which emphasizes multi-modal transportation systems, as well as the inter-agency Partnership for Sustainable Communities' policy to "develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health."

Thank you for considering this important project for Federal funding. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Charlie Denison, Advocacy Director, at charlie@livablestreets.info or 617-852-6125.

Sincerely,



Charlie Denison
Advocacy Director

cc: Secretary Jeffery B. Mullan, Massachusetts DOT