



June 2, 2015

Mary Ainsley
MBTA Design & Construction Department
GLX Project office
100 Summer Street

Cc: Karen Arpino Shaffer, Michael McBride
HDR Gilbane

Dear Ms. Ainsley,

We are writing you to express thanks and concern about the Community Path Extension Project and one of its design elements. First, thank you very much for your hard work keeping the Community Path Extension project moving forward. This project has the opportunity to create a bicycle pedestrian super highway connecting major destinations from Bedford to Boston.

However, we are very concerned about the forbidding fencing that [your informative video](#) rendering of the path brought to our attention. To our dismay we find the project includes above head-level fencing on both sides of the path on the entire corridor between Lechmere and Washington Street Station. This important one-mile corridor, with no exits along the way, is the only section with such visual barriers on both sides of the right-of-way.

Our assumption is the fence is in the design for the safety of users of the path. We believe that this forbidding-looking fencing will ironically create an unsafe prison-like feeling for users. It will be particularly onerous for pedestrians whose slow travel speeds will mean a very long unpleasant trundle through this section. Our fear is that the aesthetic will deter use of the path. Fewer users might well create a sense of danger during nighttime and off-peak hours and actually attract undesirable activities that may happen in the absence of safety-in-numbers. In essence a "safety" feature will likely render the facility less safe over time.

On the flip side of the dangerous feeling the fencing provides, it also blocks what in many cases will be a spectacular view. Imagine the North Bank Bridge (just across the park from the planned Lechmere Station) with its dramatic and beautiful architecture if it were enclosed on both sides. It would be dreary rather than the treasure it is.

We're not asking you to create production values similar to the [North Bank Bridge](#). Rather we ask you to work creatively to find a way to remove the chain link fence and preserve an eye level unobstructed view on at least one side of the path for as much of the Lechmere to Washington Street Station that you can. A rendering of the fence as designed [can be seen here](#). This can be compared with this rendering with [fencing removed on one side](#) to see that the look and feel of the experience is greatly improved. For comparison, here is a similar finish at [Harpers Ferry](#) in Virginia.

Finally, we have heard that the Green Line Project is undergoing value engineering. We hope that you will consider this reduced fencing along the Community Path Extension a win-win in reducing project costs while improving the finished product.

Sincerely,

Mark Chase
Advocacy Committee, LivableStreets Alliance

Wendy Landman
Executive Director, WalkBoston

Pete Stidman
Executive Director, Boston Cyclists Union