

July 12, 2010

DCR Commissioner Richard Sullivan

Land Boulevard in Cambridge and the Lynn Fells Parkway in Saugus were recently repaved and restriped. Unfortunately, neither Land Blvd nor (we suspect) the Fellsway received bike lanes or pedestrian improvements, in direct violation of what we understand to be DCR's current policy concerning parkway design –based on your own statements and recent DCR practice.

We have heard that this work – and perhaps other work as well – was a last-minute project. We assume that the lack of time, as well as DCR's lack of staff, led to the use of old, car-centric pavement striping designs left over from the last road repair, rather than the creation of new, multi-modal, engineer-stamped designs that reflect current values and priorities.

While we understand your predicament, this shortcut is simply unacceptable. Preliminary intersection design drawings prepared by VHB for Land Blvd as part of the Alexandria project show that it would be possible to include bike lanes without compromising traffic capacity. Given that Binney Street leading into Land Blvd is about to receive a major redesign, including cycle tracks that will make it a major bike and pedestrian route between mid-Cambridge and the Gilmore and Science Museum bridges, improving passage along Land Blvd is of great importance even though the river path is relatively nearby.

Even if this major new development were not in the works, treating Land Blvd like a mini-highway rather than a parkway endangers both public access and the legitimacy of DCR's continued stewardship of these roads.

(We are less aware of the circumstances on the Lynn Fells Parkway, but the lack of current parkway-style multi-modal treatment on that road raises the same issues.)

Because of the forthcoming Alexandria project, it may be possible to correct the Land Blvd. issue after a few frustrating years – but only if DCR admits its error and begins, now, laying the groundwork for a better approach.

So, we are not asking that DCR remove the current striping. We are, however, pushing DCR to take steps to insure that this same type of shortcut does not happen again – either along the Charles or anywhere else in the state. Based on the lessons learned from this experience, we urge DCR to consider the following:

- 1) Issue a policy directive saying that the design for every DCR project will include maximum support for walking and cycling as a fundamental expression of DCR's core recreational and parkland mission, and that no design plan created prior to 2010 can be implemented until it is reviewed and updated to incorporate this basic approach to road construction and land use.

- 2) Begin a process of creating new, preliminary road striping designs for the parkways so that you are not again caught with only obsolete car-centric plans. (Given DCR's fiscal constraints, it would be smart to start this design library by creating plans for the roadways that are most in need of repair or redesign, either because of their poor surface conditions or safety record or their pedestrian/bike-unfriendly design.
- 3) Sign a retainer with a consulting firm known for its sophistication in bike and pedestrian issues so that they can be quickly called upon to create new designs on short notice.
- 4) If it is totally impossible to create updated road marking designs in time for a project, require the sub-contractor to temporarily install dotted lines using surface paint rather than more permanent thermoplastic. Only allow the sub-contractor to complete final striping once you have acquired or designed new road striping plans.

Thank you for your attention to these issues. We seek to continue working with you to make the parklands and their access roads accessible, safe, and environmentally healthy for all.

Sincerely,

Steven E. Miller & Charlie Denison
For the LivableStreets Advocacy Committee