

September 8, 2010

Peter Gori, Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Delivered via PDF to Peter.Gori.bra@cityofboston.gov

Subject: Causeway St 25% Design Plans

Dear Mr. Gori:

On behalf of LivableStreets Alliance, we are writing in regard to the 25% plans for the Causeway Street Reconstruction presented to the community on August 5, 2010.

We fully support the core ideas expressed in this plan to improve facilities for all modes of travel. In particular, we are pleased to see wider sidewalks, better pedestrian crossings, adjustment of traffic signal positioning, and bike lanes in the designs. It is clear that great thought has been given to the overall effort.

However, we believe that several changes to the suggested bicycle infrastructure can further calm traffic, increase pedestrian access to this street, and improve the environment for all road users, thereby helping achieve the goals of the Crossroads Initiative.

The proposed design includes on-street striped bike lanes along the majority of Causeway Street. However, because of the available width of the street, the special location of this street, and the extremely high volume of pedestrian traffic, we think that Causeway should have a buffered bike lane (with a foot or more of striped pavement separating traffic from the cyclists) or, even better, a cycle track (a bike "roadway" physically separated from traffic by a curb, or by bollards or some other barrier).

There are three reasons for suggesting this approach:

1. Causeway Street is the only link between the Charles River path (to the northwest), the Rose Kennedy Greenway (to the southeast) and the Harborwalk (to the east). As each of these off-road pathways sees increased pedestrian and cyclist traffic in coming years, Causeway Street will become an increasingly critical connection. Forcing families and tourists to bike on a "naked bike lane" next to traffic will both decrease safety and create an intimidating barrier to

passage. (Research and experience show that such users insist on an unbroken system of car-free connections. As families of cyclists readily become pedestrians in a welcoming environment such as Causeway Street, it is imperative to accommodate such needs.

2. Creating an infrastructure that provides the greatest feeling of safety will encourage more people to bike to the area's major attraction, Boston Garden. The presence of a cycle track will reduce the number of automobile trips to the Garden during events, which simultaneously achieves multiple state initiatives to reduce congestion as well as greenhouse gas emissions and combat obesity.
3. The addition of cycle tracks provides an increased buffer for pedestrians from traffic, while simultaneously calming the traffic. This change will provide a large improvement to pedestrian comfort on the street, and make it more likely for many to use Causeway Street for its intended purposes.

Even should you reject the idea of cycle tracks and even of buffered bike lanes, we believe there are several other improvements worthy of consideration:

- The 25% design proposal does not have continuous bike lanes throughout the project. In some cases, the proposed bike lane striping does not even reach all the way to the intersection, with bikes being forced to share a lane with traffic. Given the intensity of Garden event traffic, safety requires that there be striped and painted pavement through intersections to establish their right of way; this is as high, if not higher, priority than striped bike lanes between intersections. Continuous bike lanes are absolutely essential, and should not be sacrificed in order to accommodate additional motor vehicle capacity.
- The addition of a bike box on southbound Lomasney Street at Lowell square would give bikes the ability to queue in advance of left turning cars onto Merrimac Street and thereby reducing the risk of conflict on the turn through this intersection.
- Similar improvements can be made for left turns at Keaney Square.
- We are surprised that there are no bike lanes on Commercial Street, Staniford Street, or on North Washington Bridge. In particular, on North Washington Bridge the plan calls for two traffic lanes to feed into three lanes for almost all phases of the traffic cycle. This lane expansion is both wasteful and encourages excessive speed by cars over the bridge. With a few adjustments to the timing for right-turning cars from Commercial Street, the third Northbound lane can be removed and replaced with full five-foot bike lanes in both directions over the length of the bridge -- again, greatly enhancing the accessibility of Causeway Street for bicycles traveling to Charlestown.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Denison". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Charlie Denison
Advocacy Director

CC:

Jonathan Greeley, Boston Redevelopment Authority

Nicole Freedman, Boston Bikes

Vineet Gupta, Boston Transportation Department

Tom Tinlin, Boston Transportation Department