

October 30, 2010

Department of Conservation and Recreation
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Delivery by Adobe PDF via email to dcr.updates@state.ma.us

Subject: Emerald Necklace Crosswalk and Pathway Treatment Guidelines

To whom it may concern:

We would like to take this opportunity to provide some suggestions and comments regarding the October 7 public meeting regarding the Emerald Necklace Crosswalk and Pathway Treatment Guidelines.

We are very pleased to learn that attention is being paid to reconnecting the Emerald Necklace for pedestrians and bicyclists through the creation of new crossings, and that existing pathways and crossings will be improved. The majority of our comments will be regarding general guidelines. However, we'd like to start by emphasizing the importance of two missing crossings:

Route 9

The lack of a safe, marked crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists at Route 9 has been a problem for many years. There is a small break in the raised median that many bicyclists currently use. However, there is neither a marked crosswalk nor any type of signage or signals warning motorists that pedestrians and bicyclists are crossing there. We urge DCR to work with the cities of Boston and Brookline to design and build a safe crossing at this location for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Charlesgate Connection

There is currently no connection from the Back Bay Fens through the Charlesgate to the Charles River Path in Boston. Students of Peter Furth from Northeastern University have devised a number of options for creating a multi-use path that would snake through the Charlesgate and connect to a new pedestrian bridge to the Charles River Path. We urge DCR to work with the City of Boston to create such a connection, so that pedestrians and bicyclists are able to travel directly between the Charles River Parklands and the Emerald Necklace.

General Pathway Treatment Guidelines

In general, we ask that DCR design and rehabilitate shared-use pathways within the Emerald Necklace using AASHTO Guidelines. AASHTO in general recommends path widths between 10 and 14 feet in width, depending on the usage of the path. It also recommends 2' buffers on either side which are clear of obstructions such as signs, fences, or trees. We also recommend striping a dashed yellow center line on most paths in order to encourage pedestrians and bicyclists to stay right except when passing.

Where pedestrian and bicycle volumes are high, it may also be desirable to create separate pedestrian and bicycle paths, either directly adjacent to each other, or separated by vegetation. In this case, the pedestrian path should be the more scenic of the two, since pedestrians should be discouraged from walking in the bicycle path. Clear signage and possibly even pavement markings should be provided to make it clear which path is for which set of users.

As shown in the October 7 presentation, some multi-use paths within the park system are made of concrete instead of asphalt, and may appear to simply be a wide sidewalk. These concrete paths should be better marked and signed to indicate to cyclists that they may indeed use them (and when they should not use them), since in most cases, these paths transition to traditional city sidewalks on which bicycle riding should be discouraged.

Crosswalk Guidelines

In general, LivableStreets recommends that DCR follow AASHTO guidelines for the treatment of multi-use path crossings. LivableStreets also recommends the following for pathway crossings:

- Crosswalks and curb cuts should be wide enough for two bicyclists to cross simultaneously, one in each direction.
- Crosswalks should be zebra-striped, as opposed to simple parallel lines, as to be very visible to motorists.
- At signalized crossings, crossing signals should be automatic (no pushbutton should be provided) and concurrently timed with a leading pedestrian interval of 3-5 seconds. (At intersections with very high volumes of motor vehicle turning movements, an automatic exclusive crossing phase could be provided.) Crossing signals should include a countdown timer to indicate how much time is remaining to cross. When possible, we suggest that both a pedestrian signal and bicycle signal head be provided at multi-use path crossings, and in particular where there are separate crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- At both signalized and unsignalized crossings, signage in advance of the crossing and at the crossing itself should be provided to alert motorists. We recommend a combined ped-bike crossing sign (MUTCD W11-15) along with complementary "TRAIL X-ING" sign (W11-15P) both in advance of the crossing at the crossing itself. In addition, an arrow sign (W16-7P) should be placed under both of these signs at the crossing itself.



**TRAIL
X-ING**

AHEAD

Possible signage in advance of crossing



**TRAIL
X-ING**



Possible signage at crossing

- At unsignalized crossings, we also recommend placing flexible “STATE LAW, YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS” signs on the yellow center line in the roadway. In addition, yield line “teeth” should be marked on the roadway prior to the crossing to show where motorists should yield/stop to let path users cross.
- For crossings at intersections, curb radii should be tightened as much as possible in order to force turning motorists to slow down, increasing safety for path users who are crossing the intersection.
- For mid-block crossings, if on-street parking is provided, curb extensions/bump-outs should be provided to reduce illegal parking near the crosswalk and to shorten the crossing distance for path users.
- Pedestrian/bicycle activated flashing beacons should be considered for mid-block crossings where visibility of pedestrians and bicyclists can be an issue for motorists. Many of these are solar powered and communicate wirelessly, making installation fairly simple. An example of one of these beacons can be found here: <http://www.spotdevices.com/sb430.html>

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,

Charlie Denison

Charlie Denison
Advocacy Director