

# The Boston Globe

## Plan seeks to link 200 miles of local pathways

Nonprofit says safety of cyclists, pedestrians is key



CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

A runner used the newly opened section of the Harborwalk at UMass Boston on July 18.

By [Travis Andersen](#) | GLOBE STAFF SEPTEMBER 12, 2015

A Cambridge nonprofit is pushing for an ambitious project to connect up to 200 miles of off-road pathways in Greater Boston to help cyclists and pedestrians navigate a congested urban landscape plagued by gridlock and safety hazards for nonmotorists.

The project, dubbed Emerald Network, was developed by the LivableStreets Alliance, which advocates for a transit system that serves cyclists and pedestrians as well as automobiles.

LivableStreets will formally announce the proposal Saturday at Tour de Streets, the group's annual fund-raiser that includes food, music, and a walk along the Charles River.

"This is the future," said Jackie Douglas, executive director of LivableStreets, in a prepared statement. "Greenway paths that are linked together so that you can move continuously from one path to another. Safe, accessible, off-road paths and their low-traffic stress connections are simply a better way to get around the city."

According to the statement, the group aims to link several routes currently under construction with existing pathways, including the Harborwalk, Somerville Community Path, and Charles River paths.

Steven E. Miller, co-founder of the Emerald Network, said in the statement that the project "grows out of our region's fabulous heritage of multi-use parks, building on our existing portfolio of over 100 miles of parkland paths to create a 200-mile web of connection."

The proposal spans communities including Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, Brookline, Milton, and Quincy, according to the group's website. The project would require approval from a number of municipalities.

LivableStreets says on its website that the "proposed routes [as part of the project] align with existing greenway, path, rail-to-trail, and municipal bicycle network upgrade and construction plans."

Amber Christoffersen, a project manager at LivableStreets, said there is no current timeframe or cost estimate for completing the project. She said funding would come from public and private entities.

"Each day we're meeting with more and more people who want to make it happen," she said. "There is definitely growing momentum."

The project will "engage multiple municipalities and public agencies, community members, businesses, and institutions and will work in parallel with the Massachusetts Area Planning Council's LandLine and Boston GreenLinks, a program of the city of Boston," according to the statement.

Chris Osgood, Boston's chief of streets who oversees the transportation and public works departments, praised the project in a statement.

"We're excited by Livable Street's Emerald Network initiative," Osgood said. "It's a perfect pairing with Boston's Green Links project — a plan to provide walking and biking connections for all residents to Boston's largest parks. The Emerald Network takes Boston's local plan to scale in the region. It sets a vision for connecting our communities, improving mobility and increasing access to this region's parks. We look forward to continuing our work with them on this effort."

On its website, LivableStreets says the Emerald Network will create "greenway paths that are linked together so that instead of stopping and starting, you can walk or bike continuously from one to another. Greenways advance protected paths for a variety of nonmotorized activities, such as walking, pushing strollers, jogging, skating, and biking."

The dangers of cycling in and around Boston were thrown into stark relief last month when 38-year-old Anita Kurmann was killed by a flatbed truck that struck her bicycle near the Back Bay intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Beacon Street.

"Our roads are congested, and we need to rethink how we're getting around the city," Christoffersen said, adding that the Emerald Network is "one solution to that problem."

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