

Cambridge Nonprofit Seeks To Connect 200 Miles Of Paths

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A person bikes along the Charles River Esplanade on an evening in July. The esplanade is part of the existing infrastructure that is part of the proposed Emerald Network. (Hadley Green for WBUR)

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BOSTON A Cambridge nonprofit wants to connect almost 200 miles of off-road pedestrian and cyclist paths in Greater Boston to make travel safer and easier.

At its annual Tour de Streets fundraiser Saturday, Cambridge-based LivableStreets Alliance officially unveiled a proposal for its Emerald Network project, which aims to connect pathways to better accommodate non-motorists.

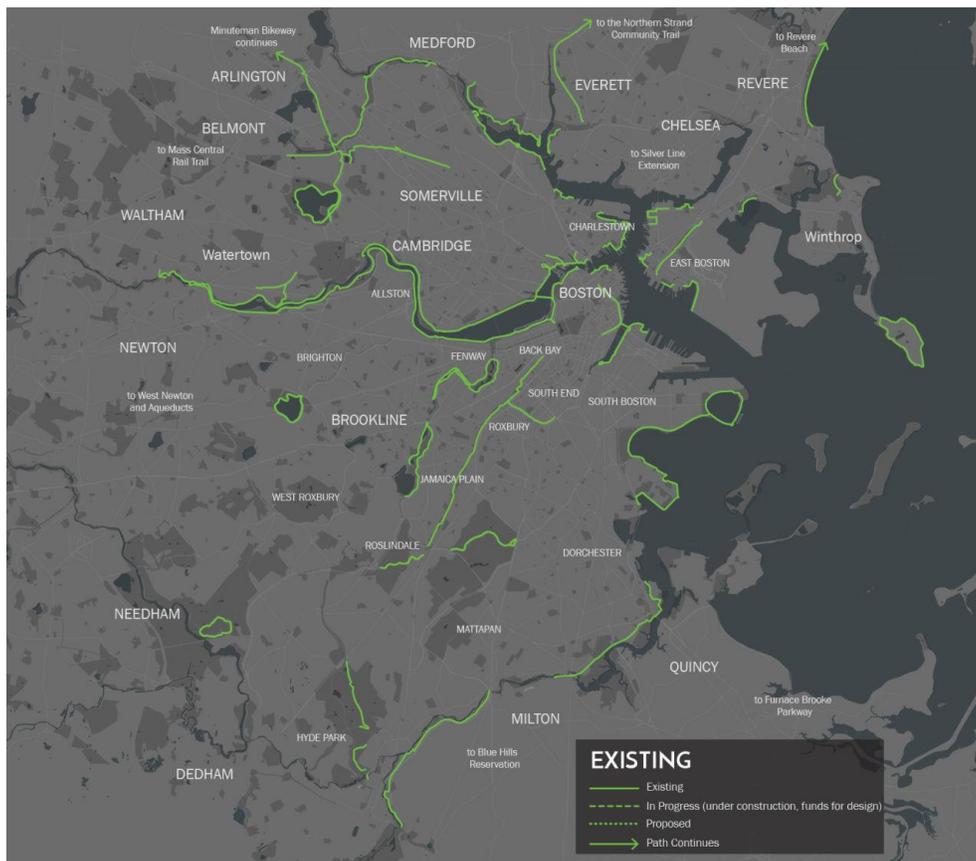
“Our streets should be focused on people, and be public spaces where people can get to where they want to go safely, efficiently, affordably and enjoyably,” LivableStreets’ deputy director Stacy Thompson said.

Thompson says she wants people to start thinking of the city’s streets as “living, breathing transportation ecosystems.”

Although there is no exact price tag on how much the Emerald Network would cost, Thompson says the plan is to build off of the 100 miles of existing infrastructure, including paths like the Emerald Necklace and Jamaica Plain’s Arborway.

“Years of thinking and research and collaboration have gone into what these connections might look like and where they should be,” she said. “We are talking about something that is around us already.”

The Emerald Network would loop a continuous path through the Greater Boston area, from the Mystic River to the Neponset River, according to the [LivableStreets website](#). Here’s a look at the existing pathways:



The existing cyclist- and pedestrian-friendly pathways in the Greater Boston area. (Courtesy LiveableStreets Alliance)

LivableStreets proposal would link together the existing paths and add some addition routes:



LiveableStreets Alliance envisioned Emerald Network. (Courtesy LiveableStreets Alliance)

Saturday’s Tour de Streets fundraiser, a day featuring bike rides and walks along the Charles River, emerged as an event to commemorate Bob Zeeb, a Newton Public Schools teacher killed in a bicycle accident six years ago.

In the wake of [Anita Kurmann’s death](#) last month, who was killed while biking in Back Bay, Thompson says initiatives like the Emerald Network can offer a vision for an environment supportive of all individuals in transit — from motorists to pedestrians to cyclists to skateboarders.

“We need to get past our differences and change something because ... one more person passing away is too many,” she said. “Let’s stop arguing, let’s get creative and let’s find solutions.”

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