



Are you on board?

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May 14, 2019

Via email: page.czepiga@state.ma.us

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Attention: Page Czepiga
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Mystic River Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing, Environmental Notification Form

Dear Ms. Czepiga,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the Mystic River Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing submitted by Massachusetts Property (proponent). Earlier this year, Boston Harbor Now submitted comments for the ENF filing and the Chapter 91 license for the Draw Seven Pathway Extension Project. At the time, we strongly supported the creation of a multi-use pedestrian/bike pathway, and today, we remain encouraged by the Draw Seven Pathway Extension project and the proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing.

We applaud the proponent for moving this important project forward. We strongly support their efforts and the creation of the Mystic River Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing in coordination the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Draw Seven Pathway Extension Project currently underway.

Together, these connections will significantly improve the pedestrian and bike-friendly routes of the region as well as provide a critical link between Everett, Somerville, the MTBA Assembly Station, and abutting neighborhoods.

Project Description

As presented in the ENF, the proposed bridge will be 12 feet wide, 785 feet long and approximately 56 feet high at the top of the arch. The bridge will cross the Lower Mystic River with the Everett side connection at the Encore Boston Harbor Resort harborwalk and the Somerville side connection at the Draw Seven Park. The proposed design includes lighting, seating, and signage along the entire

length of the bridge. Clear markings will signal travel directions and encourage pedestrians and bicyclists to share the travel lanes.

Portions of the site are owned by the Commonwealth and managed by DCR. Per an existing terms and conditions construction and access permit, DCR will own the bridge structure once it is completed.

The project area has been identified in DCR's 2009 Mystic River Master Plan as part of a pedestrian and bicycle network that will address a range of environmental, open space, and land use issues in and around the Mystic River.

Bridge Design & Public Access

It has come to Boston Harbor Now's attention that the width of the bridge has been reduced from 14 feet to 12 feet. While the proposal mentions the new 12-foot width, the renderings included in the project filing -- specifically figure 3-6 -- do not clearly show the size and scale of the proposed width. We respectfully request that future renderings clearly identify the proposed width and incorporate renderings of proposed amenities like benches, lighting, and wayfinding signage.

In March, the [Boston Globe](#) covered an unfortunate fatal cyclist collision on the Minuteman Bikeway from Cambridge to Bedford. After colliding on the 12-foot wide path, one cyclist sustained serious injuries and the other was fatally wounded.

The Mystic River Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing will be a critical and long-term pedestrian and bike connection, particular care should be given to the design of the pathway that promote both function and safety for both bicyclist and pedestrians. If the bridge is intended to be both a pedestrian and bike crossing, it should be wide enough to accommodate both uses in each direction and designed to minimize pedestrians-cyclist conflicts. Expanding the crossing to 14 feet would allow 7 feet to be shared by pedestrian, strollers, wheelchairs, bicycles, and others in either direction.

Finally, as the project moves forward through the permitting process and due to the significance of this connection for members of the public, we respectfully request that a public hearing be held as part of the Chapter 91 Waterways License Application process.

We look forward to the construction of the bicycle and pedestrian crossing. This project will serve to enhance the regional network of waterfront bike/pedestrian pathways that ensure our waterfront is more publicly accessible, more frequently visited, and welcoming to everyone. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Jill Valdes Horwood
Director of Policy