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15 State Street Suite 1100  
Boston, MA 02109  
617 223 8667  
[bostonharbornow.org](http://bostonharbornow.org)

May 31, 2022

Via email: [daniel.padien@state.ma.us](mailto:daniel.padien@state.ma.us),  
[christine.hopps@state.ma.us](mailto:christine.hopps@state.ma.us)

Bethany A. Card, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Attn: Daniel Padien and Christine Hopps, MassDEP Waterways (DEP)

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Re: Chapter 91 License Application for Neponset River Greenway Extension  
- Tenean Beach to Morrissey Blvd

Dear Mr. Padien and Ms. Hopps,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Chapter 91 Waterways License Application for the Neponset River Greenway (Greenway) extension between Tenean Beach and Morrissey Boulevard on the Dorchester waterfront. More specifically, this phase of the Neponset River Greenway “includes obtaining a new license for the previously proposed and licensed “northern section” from Victory Road to the William T. Morrissey Boulevard and a new “southern section” connecting Victory Road to Tenean Beach off Conley Street.” We would like to take the opportunity to comment on proposed work that is within the jurisdiction of Chapter 91—a 670-foot long segment of elevated boardwalk across coastal areas in Dorchester Bay and multi-use trail construction on filled tidelands—as well as this phase of the Greenway project as a whole. Boston Harbor Now staff did a site visit with members of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) team in September 2021 and hosted DCR at a Harbor Use Public Forum about the project in November 2021.

This project, jointly led by DCR and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), will not only extend the existing Greenway, which reaches into Milton, Hyde Park, and Mattapan, north along Dorchester Bay to disconnected parks and beaches, but it will also provide an essential Harborwalk connection in this area. Historically this has been the longest break in the Harborwalk outside of a designated port area. By providing this critical protected path, people walking, biking, running, and rolling have a safe new link for exploring the shoreline and traveling north-south in Dorchester.



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We are particularly excited by the improved entrance to Victory Road Park, the part of the Greenway that extends north from there, and the boardwalk connection to Morrissey Boulevard. As such, we commend this project and anticipate the approval of its Chapter 91 license.

### *Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage*

In October 2019, Boston Harbor Now hosted a series of community walks along the Harborwalk. The Dorchester Harborwalk walk, from Neponset River Reservation at Granite Ave to Carson Beach, included extensive paths through existing DCR parks that followed the mouth of the Neponset River and the shoreline of Boston Harbor. In this area, clear way-finding signage indicates that the path is both part of the Greenway and the Harborwalk. Although the proposed Greenway segment departs from the waterfront, we hope that signage will indicate that this is either part of the Harborwalk, particularly the boardwalk section that connects to Morrissey Boulevard, or a connection between segments of Harborwalk, particularly where it runs to the west of Interstate 93. Signage should be designed to meet the needs of people following the path continuously and accessing it from intersecting streets.

Additionally, should DCR wish to enhance the sections of the path adjacent to the waterfront, beaches, and parks with interpretive signage pertaining to the history or ecology of the Harborwalk in those sections, we recommend partnering with the Friends of the Boston Harborwalk who have helped to research and design standardized and informative signage elsewhere on the Harborwalk. Examples can be found at [boshw.us](http://boshw.us).

### *The Next Chapter*

Overall, the design for this phase of the Neponset River Greenway is aligned with the current usage and climate change projections. The 10-foot path width with 2-foot shoulders is consistent with other multi-use trail designs around the Commonwealth. We regret that the boardwalk is only 10 feet wide at a point where people traveling may be in conflict with people stopping to enjoy the view, but we understand that there have been limitations to the width in order to address wildlife needs under the boardwalk. The boardwalk section will be built at elevation 18.4' NAVD 88 (24.8' Boston City Base), which is well above the recommended minimum elevation outlined in guidance documents like the Boston Planning and Development Agency's 2019 *Coastal Flood Resilience Design Guidelines*. This should keep the boardwalk



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above projected sea level rise and storm surge heights through the end of this century. All of these features make the path consistent with what Boston Harbor Now terms “Harborwalk 2.0”— a conceptual framework we use to ensure that the design of the waterfront is accessible and welcoming, is prepared for the coastal impacts of climate change, and centers equity and inclusion in its design and programming.

The 2020 City of Boston report *Coastal Resilience Solutions for Dorchester*, however, included a more aspirational vision for how to provide connections for people walking and biking as well as bold coastal protections in this area. Should a future combination of coastal storm impacts, heavy usage, or applicable funding opportunities emerge, we hope that a bolder and more complex design will enable greater waterfront access, new connections between Tenean Beach and Victory Park, and a wider corridor for people seeking a safe, non-motorized way to travel north and south in this area. In the meantime, we also look forward to improvements to Morrissey Boulevard to make it a safer place to travel on foot and by bike while also elevating it and enhancing the climate preparedness of this roadway.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and look forward to continued collaboration with DCR to provide high quality waterfront access and connections along the Boston Harbor shoreline. Boston Harbor Now will continue to follow this project through future phases and construction. Our staff would be happy to speak further with the MassDEP Waterways office if there are additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathy Abbott".

Katherine F. Abbott  
President and CEO  
Boston Harbor Now