

**Emerald Necklace Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossings Committee Meeting  
Town Hall, Selectmen's Hearing Room, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Wednesday, January 4, 2012, 6 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present:** Erin Chute Gallentine (Acting Chair), Kate Bowditch, Julie Crockford, Rob Daves, Guus Driessen, Linda Hamlin, Arlene Mattison, Tommy Vitolo, Clara Batchelor

**Committee Members Absent:** Jesse Mermell, Patrice Kish, Kathe Geist

**Staff Present:** Peter Ditto, Rob Kefalas, Joe Viola, Heather Charles Lis

**Guests Present:** see attached

**Welcome/Call Meeting to Order**

E. Gallentine, Director of Parks and Open Space, called the meeting to order and said she would Chair the meeting in place of Jesse Mermell, who could not be present.

**Approval of Minutes**

A. Mattison noted some edits to her comments in the draft minutes from 11/3/11. T. Vitolo moved to approve the minutes from 10/3/11 and 11/3/11 with minor modifications. All in favor.

**Review of Project Description and Scope**

E. Gallentine briefly reviewed the project and the last meeting and explained the agenda.

**Presentation of Project Area Crossings**

John Diaz, Vice President/Project Director with GPI, said the consultants would present several options and would use the input and feedback from tonight's meeting in more detailed options. Phil Goff, Senior Planner with Alta Planning + Design, gave a presentation, beginning by reviewing the project goals, and noting that there are two main options with smaller sub-options that can be mixed and matched. Some of the features he described follow. Attendees asked clarifying or technical questions.

***Netherlands/Parkway Rd.***

- Option 1. The northern half of Netherlands Rd. becomes one-way southbound and the other half stays two-way, allowing the Town to access the Water and Sewer garage. Netherlands Rd. has a bike lane on one side, a contra flow bike lane, a raised crosswalk, and shared lane markings. Parkway Rd. has an enhanced contraflow bike lane, potentially with bollards, and a narrow pedestrian area. Brookline Ave. has a crossbike adjacent to pedestrian crosswalks and a short southbound bike lane, a lowered path along the Riverway and a bicycle queue box. Gary Claiborne, Senior Landscape Designer with Pressley Associates, explained the implications of lowering the path, including the need for a new retaining wall for flood control and impacts to tree roots, mostly of small caliper Norway maples.
- Option 2. Netherlands Rd. remains two-way, and there is a shared use path for bicycles and pedestrians on Netherlands and Parkway Rd. G. Claiborne discussed the potential impacts of construction on the roots of the row of linden trees on Parkway Rd. and recommended removing them and replanting with appropriate trees on the park side of the concrete wall. Brookline Ave. has a new signal and no separate crossbikes. The path along the Riverway stays at the current grade and ramps are added for access down to Brookline Ave.

Attendees asked questions about the road and median widths, logistics of paths and separation from street, scope of work, and whether the Emerald Necklace Master Plan calls for closing Netherlands Rd. to traffic, which E. Gallentine will confirm.

### ***River Rd.***

Both options make River Rd. one-way going southbound, the pathway is widened and kept at grade, the off ramp going southbound from Riverway to River Rd. is removed, and there is an opportunity for additional parking spaces on River Rd.

- Option 1. There is a 10 foot or similar width shared-use paved path, with grass buffers on either side.
- Option 2. There is a 15 foot or similar width path paved on one side for bikes and others, and gravel on the side near the retaining wall for pedestrians and runners.

Attendees asked questions about the logistics of making River Rd. one-way and car volumes.

### ***Route 9***

Both options consider removal of an inbound lane for a portion of Route 9.

- Option 1. An at-grade path continues across Route 9 in a wide crosswalk with a wider (13 feet) median. There is an optional traffic light with trees planted in the median to continue the park canopy. The ramp into Pond Ave. has a new median, a new raised crosswalk, and altered geometry to “t” into Pond Ave. further from Route 9.

Attendees asked questions about the grades of crosswalks and paths, which are currently eroded, trees in the median and the need for visibility for safety, traffic counts and the implications of removing an inbound lane on Route 9 for cars and the bus stop, considering the Gateway East plans and the 1 Brookline Place plans, the width of the median and shoulders, coordinating a new signal with existing signals and traffic, and whether a staggered crossing would work. J. Viola noted that the current limit of work for Gateway East ends before Pond Ave.

- Option 2. There is a 13 to 15 foot path on the bridge over Route 9 that is either shared-use or has a separate sidewalk and cycle track, with the vehicle travel widths adjusted accordingly. There is an option to remove on and off ramps at the north end, and G. Claiborne said there is also a possibility of daylighting the river there as was shown historically, with a pedestrian bridge. They are still working on the south end design, which is more difficult, and currently includes new crosswalks. There is also still an at grade crossing on Route 9.

E. Gallentine thanked the consultants for their work and for incorporating the comments and preferences from the last meeting.

## **Emerald Necklace Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossings Comment**

### ***Committee Comment***

E. Gallentine asked for comments from the Committee members.

- G. Driessen said snow removal could be hard in the winter, such as on Parkway Rd., and P. Goff said bollards could be removed. For Netherlands Rd., G. Driessen said he liked the accessible pathways in the middle. For Aspinwall Ave., he is concerned about the ramps and bikers coming into the area where people are waiting for buses, and prefers that they cross at a 90 degree angle to face traffic. For River Rd., he prefers option 1 with tree lawn on both sides of a wide path, but he isn't sure how well the grass will survive. For Route 9,

he is concerned about how two lanes will function and thinks traffic will back up. He prefers the ramp from Pond Ave. to be further from Route 9. He asked how the crossing signals would work, and J. Diaz explained they are pedestrian-activated signals and how they would work. G. Driessen suggested a wider shoulder on the bridge. He said visibility of bikes and pedestrians on the Jamaica way to Pond Ave. ramp is very important.

- K. Bowditch thanked the consultants, and discussed the Open Space Plan and stressed the importance of connecting with goals from the plan, which she would like to tie into where appropriate. She discussed the greenway concept and improving stormwater management, including reducing runoff and reducing impervious cover, and said she would like to see permeable options. She discussed the benefits of vegetation and suggested maximizing trees and vegetation wherever possible, such as on Parkway Rd. and River Rd. where traffic is lower. She asked that traffic lanes be narrowed as much as feasible. She briefly described her work with the City of Boston's Complete Streets Initiative. She talked about visual and other negative impacts of a lot of pavement without vegetation. She is glad to eliminate on/off ramps. She offered to provide site-specific suggestions, and is overall very excited.
- A. Mattison thanked the consultants and K. Bowditch for her comments. For River Rd., she discussed the need for a sense of the park here, since it is not very park-like now. She questioned whether grass would be difficult to maintain, but said some vegetation is important to soften the wall, and suggested considering different options and opportunities here. She discussed the importance of keeping connections to Olmsted Park and the rest of the Emerald Necklace, and a historic feeling. She asked for opinions on bikes and pedestrians sharing the road as some options show.
- J. Crockford asked about a pedestrian option on the other side of River Rd. For Parkway Rd. she would like to see the trees stay or some other vegetation. She asked if people would use the sidewalk on the other side. She asked about using the stairs in the actual park, and having bikes use the path on the Brookline side. She wants to see as much greenery as possible and consideration of options besides grass, so the vegetation is less friendly to walk on but still soften the wall for example. She thanked the consultants.
- L. Hamlin asked about the costs. She said lowering the path along Brookline Ave. seems fraught, expensive and not the way to go. She agreed with many of the other comments, including using natural materials to separate the paths. She prefers less signage and less visual clutter, and even using vegetation to show the way. She asked that the consultants look at the traffic counts for three versus two lanes on Route 9, and how people turn at S. Huntington Ave. She expressed interest in hearing the consultants' preferences.
- T. Vitolo said he liked the designs overall. For Netherlands Rd. he suggested cycle tracks, including rails, for safety. He asked about vehicles on the two-way that are not going to the DPW garage, and J. Diaz said there would be a sign at the end. For Brookline Ave., T. Vitolo thinks the crossbikes do not make sense, and P. Goff explained how they would work. T. Vitolo said he prefers not implying that bicyclists can't cross in either direction. He thinks the queue box is not intuitive if there isn't a signal light present. For Parkway Rd. he expressed concern that people will park in the bike/pedestrian path even with the curb, and suggested a tree lawn, as well as a narrower road. J. Ferris suggested a high curb. For River Rd. he suggested more park on the east side instead of more parking. He asked the consultants about stone dust and the preferences of pedestrians and joggers, and P. Goff explained the mixed reactions. T. Vitolo suggested new geometry for Pond Ave. itself. For Route 9, he suggested determining an appropriate minimum length for the median refuge

and using this, and considering that some people will always get stuck in the middle. He loves the option with the path on the bridge and thinks joggers as well as bikers will prefer this. For the Pond Ave. on/off ramps he suggested a crosswalk halfway down Pond Ave. with a fence at the Jamaica way end to overcome the desire lines and get people to more safely cross at the crosswalk. He is generally concerned with snow maintenance. He hopes the Gateway East project includes cycle tracks at several roads and connections in the area. He replied to A. Mattison's question about bikes and pedestrians sharing space, which he thinks depends partly on the width of the path.

- R. Daves said he likes removing the Riverway to River Rd. exit ramp, but does want to keep access to Route 9, particularly for the Longwood Medical Area. For the Pond Ave. on/off ramps, he is worried about the safety of the crosswalks, and he likes the new "t" geometry. For Route 9, he loves the option with a shared path on the bridge, which he thinks will work well since it will mostly be bikes. For River Rd. he thinks the one-way option and some grass along the path are good. He noted the presentation only showed the left side of the wall, but the right side is in bad shape, and E. Gallentine said this will be part of the overall Muddy River restoration project. He discussed concerns over making part of Route 9 two lanes and traffic at S. Huntington Ave., and suggested two lanes just to the bridge with extra space at and after the bridge for buses, turning, and people exiting the Riverway. J. Diaz said they will consider the lane configuration and lane use, but noted some of this area is in Boston. R. Daves said the crosswalk signal at Route 9 may not work and may make congestion worse, and suggested having the median at a 45 degree angle so people face traffic, and J. Diaz said the signal will tie into other signals. R. Daves expressed snow removal concerns, and considering the maintenance costs for restriping. He suggested keeping signage to a minimum.
- A. Mattison said there was a discussion at the beginning of the Gateway East project of closing River Rd., and she also said she doesn't understand or see the value in having the one-way in the proposed southbound direction, partly since a northbound one-way alleviates congestion on Route 9. J. Diaz said a problem with a northbound one-way is there is no access to Route 9 eastbound. He said keeping River Rd. open in general keeps access for the businesses and parking, but a two-way limits the width for a path so they must make it one-way or remove parking. K. Bowditch asked about traffic counts. J. Diaz said they may need to analyze both directions more fully.
- E. Gallentine summarized some written comments provided by P. Kish of DCR, who could not attend the meeting. For Netherlands Rd., P. Kish/DCR are very supportive of the one-way option for a portion of the road, and E. Gallentine noted the Director of Water and Sewer is also supportive. For the River Rd. ramp on/off ramp to Riverway, they are supportive of improving the bike/pedestrian connections and would be interested in studying complete elimination of the ramp. For the at grade crossing at Route 9, they asked about eliminating one westbound lane and whether an unsignalized crossing would be possible and safe. For the bike/pedestrian bridge over Route 9, they feel this option accommodates bike access, but they are concerned about bikes crossing the Pond Ave. ramp and suggested various options and considerations for this area.
- E. Gallentine said she looked at the lindens on Parkway Rd. with the Tree Warden, who said their roots are compacted and growth is stunted, and supports removal if needed, and including new historically appropriate plantings and stormwater management. She said there is space for tree planting behind the wall. For the roadway width, she said to consider

that Water and Sewer will use the road for large vehicles and equipment, including deliveries. She is worried about the impacts of the road and salt on vegetation between the path and road. For Brookline Ave., she is concerned about the cost of the lowered path option and thinks a wall will separate users even more from the park, and asked if the wall is necessary. She is not opposed to the ramps, but doesn't want them to be the only option, and P. Goff said they could consider a hybrid option. K. Bowditch agreed that she would prefer to not have a new wall in this area due to the visual impact, even if it is lowered. E. Gallentine likes having bikes and pedestrians crossing both ways at both intersections across Brookline Ave., which P. Goff also prefers. For River Rd., she asked the consultants to look at the traffic and one-way impacts for the next meeting, and she doesn't want a grass strip on the inside and prefers a porous surface and trees planted on the other side. She said her comments for Route 9 were similar.

- C. Batchelor said she prefers the path closer to the wall on River Rd., with more vegetation between the path and the road. She asked if the path could be raised to see over the wall more. She suggested a high, double curb on both River Rd. and Parkway Rd. She also suggested the path could curve around trees that we want to keep.

### ***Public Comment***

E. Gallentine asked for comments from the public.

- Jeffrey Ferris asked if there was any opportunity to move the wall to the outside of the path on River Rd., and P. Furth suggested making a levy and raising the path. J. Ferris commented on the widths of various paths and the importance of ensuring they are comfortable to use and not too narrow.
- Peter Furth said for Parkway Rd. he thinks pedestrians will use the path with stairs and it will be mostly bikes on the new path, so he is in favor of keeping it smaller with more green features, including trees, and impervious surface. For Brookline Ave. he said a one-way crossing is not feasible or ideal. For Netherlands Rd., he said making it one-way is very sensible from a safety point of view, and suggested pushing the pavement out at the crossing to make the do not enter work. He suggested eliminating the center line on the two-way portion of Netherlands Rd. to help accommodate bikers. For Brookline Ave. he said to maximize the width of the median with a minimum of 6 feet. He said to not compromise the path safety for people who want to ride in the road. For River Rd. he asked if they looked at car access from Brookline Ave. between the businesses, but this may be private. For Route 9 if it remains three lanes, he thinks an unsignalized crossing is not safe enough. He loves the path on the bridge and agrees with others that the crossing at the Pond Ave. on/off ramp is unsafe and suggested winding the path around with a high curb at the corner.
- Anne Lusk discussed her strong support for cycle tracks and their use elsewhere. She said the path over the bridge should be the cycle track option with hardscape next to it since otherwise strollers and rollerbladers will use the cycle track. She said there should be cycle tracks on both side of Route 9, and said a median is not needed and a parallel bicycle-pedestrian facility would be better. For River Rd. she suggested it should be one-way going northbound and she discussed the traffic on this road. She suggested the park next to River Rd. could be widened. She said to keep the bikes and pedestrians separate, have a two-way cycle track, and have the path higher to see into the park, with a railing. For Brookline Ave. she discussed the importance of a clear crossing. For Netherlands Rd. she suggested a two-

way cycle track on the right and not having two crossings. E. Gallentine noted the need to provide for people with disabilities and strollers.

### **Conclusion**

E. Gallentine informed everyone that the next public meeting would be on 2/1/12 at 6 p.m. (NOTE: meeting was later postponed till 3/7/12) She summarized the general preferences of the Committee: for Netherlands Rd. making a portion one-way, for Parkway Rd. having a shared path on the park side with consideration of a cycle-track, for Brookline Ave. having a shared crossing and minimizing walls or lowering the shared path, for River Rd. and Route 9 having raised crosswalks, and for River Rd. studying a one-way option for both directions more carefully and expanding the park here. For Route 9 there was not a consensus on whether to have a signalized crossing or not, with several pros and cons of each option discussed briefly. E. Gallentine asked the consultants to continue to analyze both options for Route 9, including traffic and any accident data. She also asked them to have some costs and implications for the next meeting. J. Crockford said the consultants should also obtain the treatment guidelines from the ENC/DCR pathways enhancement project.

### Documents Used at the Meeting:

- Meeting agenda
- Draft minutes from 10/3/11 and 11/3/11
- Presentation prepared by GPI, 1/4/12

Submitted by H. Lis.