



MEMORANDUM

TO: Erin Gallentine, Commissioner of Public Works
Robert King, Director of Engineering and Transportation
William Smith, Construction Project Coordinator

FROM: Scott Schreiber, Project Manager
Jaime Vasquez, Deputy Project Manager
Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis, Senior Consultant, Communications and Public Involvement

DATE: October 13, 2022

SUBJECT: Davis Path Footbridge Replacement – October 3rd Public Site Walk

October 3rd, 2022 Public Site Walk Notes

On the 3rd of October 2022 between 5:00 and 7:00 PM, the Town of Brookline held the public site walk associated with the reconstruction of the Davis Path Footbridge over the MBTA Green Line D Branch between Boylston Street (Route 9) and White Place. The footbridge has been closed since removal of the deteriorated span over the railroad tracks in the summer of 2020. The site walk had been discussed at the first meeting of the project's Design Review Committee (DRC) on September 14th and was advertised by the Town of Brookline using the project's email list, distribution of approximately 500 flyers at homes and businesses surrounding the footbridge, and with large display signs located on the ends of the bridge itself, in the Boylston Street Park and playground and the Emerson Gardens Park and playground. The site walk was attended by approximately 30 members of the community including the chairs of the DRC and Brookline Select Board member Miriam Aschkenasy. The walk was staffed by representatives of the Town of Brookline and the project's consultant team.

The tone of the comments provided at the walk was strongly positive with all attendees voicing their support for replacing the bridge and several commenting on a sense of loss in the neighborhood since the original span's closure with one noting that while the original bridge had not, in his opinion been beautiful, it had been useful and losing it felt like "an old friend going away." Many participants made suggestions that they felt would speed up replacement of the structure. Comments fell into the following broad, thematic areas: process, bridge functionality, and bridge appearance.

Process

With regard to process, attendees wanted to get a better sense of project timing. Questions were raised about what the 25% design to be presented to the Select Board would include and how long it would take to replace the structure after that. Team members explained the 25% design using the analogy of a kitchen remodeling noting that at the 25% design level the placement of elements like the sink and stove would be fixed, but that the selection of tiles and paint colors would take place closer to the 75% level. The exact timing of overall replacement remains open at this time since it is driven by the design selected and how much that design will cost to implement.

Another process topic was the idea of a temporary bridge which would connect the existing stairs with a prefabricated deck. Project team members noted that this would not be possible since even a temporary structure would need to be fully accessible and providing accessibility is one of the major challenges associated with the job. Related to the idea of

WSP USA
13th Floor
100 Summer Street
Boston, MA 02110

Tel.: +1 617 426-7330
Fax: +1 617 482-8487
wsp.com

MEMO

speeding up replacement of the structure, one attendee asked if the existing stairs could be removed now since they are not accessible and will likely need to be replaced to accommodate a new bridge. Similarly, a White Place resident noted the length of time needed to move utility poles and suggested that the project should act as soon as possible to remove the one nearest the stairs on that side of the bridge to speed up construction.

Functionality

In terms of functionality, attendees commented extensively on the importance of the bridge as a community connector especially to the Lincoln High School which is used as a swing space for other Brookline Schools when they are under construction, access to the Boylston Street playground and its associated field which is used for soccer, an off-leash dog park, and the youngest level of area little league. It was noted by multiple participants that any replacement bridge should be fully accessible to all including those using various mobility aids, pushing strollers, or traveling by bicycle. One attendee suggested that since it is highly likely that an elevator or lift of some kind will be required on White Place, it might be worthwhile to put an elevator at both ends of the structure. Other participants suggested extending the bridge either across Route 9 to better connect with the Walnut Footpath or into a portion of White Place to connect to Emerson Gardens. It was also suggested that the ramp on the Boylston Street Park side of the bridge need not follow the existing path footprint and could instead ramp up along the fence for the Green Line and create a better buffer between the park and railroad.

Another functionality topic was the idea of providing better lighting on the bridge and a more transparent structure overall. While most participants commented that they had not seen people loitering on the bridge when it was open, it was clarified by a resident of White Place that the concern over loitering was based on the fact that with the angled stairwell on north side of the bridge, "you could hear people before you saw them, and you only saw them when you were right on top of them. Nine times of ten, they were your neighbors' kids, but you didn't know until it could have been too late." This participant further commented that it would be "good to have a bridge that a police officer could easily view from his cruiser." Another idea for lighting came from residents of Cameron Street who suggested that lights along the edge of the park adjacent to the Green Line would help them feel safer walking from their street to the bridge at night.

Many participants suggested that a replacement structure should have lighting in the railings to add more light to the area in general without high intensity street lights which would make sleeping difficult in homes on White Place or the hotel on Boylston Street. It was also suggested that the bridge incorporate trash cans to prevent bagged dog waste from the park accumulating in residential garbage cans on White Place and provided with an anti-graffiti coating as the sides of the Boylston Street stairs have historically been a canvas for graffiti. It is worth noting that several tags were seen on the evening of the site walk.

Also noted was the idea of the Davis Path Footbridge in the broader context of the non-motorized network in this section of North Brookline and how it provides connections between the Walnut Path, Pill Hill, Emerson Gardens, and Brookline's Civic Center which includes Town Hall and the Public Library's central location. Several attendees suggested options to better connect the Walnut Path with the Davis Path Bridge. Some were simple in nature, such as wayfinding signage, where others were more complex including moving of crosswalks or curb lines. It was discussed that the current crosswalk on Boylston Street does align with the Old Lincoln High School which remains important given its continued on-and-off usage by Brookline public school students.

Bridge Appearance

In terms of how the new structure would look and feel, participants were divided. Some attendees mentioned the idea that the bridge should be more than simply functional, incorporating features such as a wider deck over the Green Line and benches to make it a destination rather than "just a pass-through." White Place residents tended to fall into the functional group noting that they would prefer bridge users to travel over the structure and keep moving whereas participants from the Boylston Street side seemed more in favor of the destination approach with a bridge that interacts with the park. Some attendees suggested incorporating seating into the bridge that would allow parents to watch little league games. Participants talked about the existing structure as "blocky" and visually uninteresting, but at the same time noted the importance of its history to the area suggesting that a new bridge could incorporate historical panels commemorating what had gone before.

MEMO

Attendee Name	Affiliation
Antonia Bellalta	Resident
Ava Lee	Resident
Brendan Downey	Resident
Brian Kane	Resident
Charlotte Osborne	Resident
Deirdre Buckley	Resident
Erin Chute Gallentine	Town of Brookline
Etty Padmodipoetro	Consultant Team
Frances Shedd-Fisher	Resident
Harvey Wilson	Resident
Henry Winkleman	BCOP
Jaime Vasquez	Consultant Team
James Lee	BCOP
Jeff Rudolph	Resident
Jess Hamilton	Resident
Jessica Wilson	Resident
Jessie Waisnor	Town of Brookline
Jimmy Chu	Resident
Kerri Smith	Resident
Louis Kaplan	Resident
Matt [last name illegible]	Resident
Milly Baker	Resident
Miriam Aschkenasy	Select Board Member
Nathan Littlefield	Resident
Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis	Consultant Team
Pallavi Mande	Consultant Team
Randolph Meiklejohn	Resident
Rebecca Perry	Resident
Stephen Burlington	Resident
WyndSOR DePetro	Resident