

**Emerald Necklace Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossings Committee Meeting  
Town Hall, Selectmen's Hearing Room  
Wednesday, March 7, 2012, 6 p.m.**

**Committee Members Present:** Jesse Mermell (Chair), Kate Bowditch, Julie Crockford, Rob Daves, Guus Driessen, Kathe Geist, Linda Hamlin, Patrice Kish, Arlene Mattison, Tommy Vitolo

**Committee Members Absent:** Clara Batchelor

**Staff Present:** Erin Chute Gallentine, Peter Ditto, Rob Kefalas, Joe Viola, Todd Kirrane, Heather Charles Lis

**Guests Present:** see attached

**Welcome/Call Meeting to Order**

J. Mermell, Selectman and Committee Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

**Approval of Minutes**

All were in favor of approving the minutes from 1/4/12. J. Mermell, P. Kish and K. Geist abstained since they were not present at the 1/4/12 meeting.

**Presentation of Project Area Crossings**

John Diaz, Vice President/Project Director with GPI, gave a presentation including summarizing the findings from the last meeting, reviewing the project goals, reviewing the critical areas crossings, and presenting concepts for each crossing including traffic impacts, consistency with the Emerald Necklace Master Plan, landscaping options, and finally order of magnitude construction costs. Some highlights of the presentation on the crossings include:

***Netherlands/Parkway Rd./Aspinwall Ave.***

- There are two options for the north section of Netherlands Rd., one-way southbound with a raised path, crosswalk and cycle track, or full closure with paths and additional parkland. J. Diaz presented the traffic mitigation including various modifications to signals and turns at Brookline Ave. at Riverway for the one-way, and a new right turn lane from Riverway onto Brookline Ave. for the full closure. M. Pressley said full closure is recommended in the Master Plan and discussed implementation and the potential for additional trees and regaining park use on the Boston side. J. Diaz presented traffic study results for the options and how mitigation offsets additional traffic. M. Pressley noted the downside of full closure is losing some parkland to the new right turn lane, and impacts on the linear path system.
- Parkway Rd. would have a raised path on the park side and a sidewalk on the other side, and additional plantings behind the wall. Marion Pressley, Principal with Pressley Associates, explained the benefits of increased planting on the other side of the wall including a wider, more useable bike path instead of a narrow median with challenges for vegetation. She explained why it is not possible to remove the wall or move it further out.
- Aspinwall Ave. would have new crossings, and for ADA access at these crossing, there is minimal grading required and sidewalk modifications would be done with ramps added. The berm would remain for flood control. A couple of parking spaces would be removed to

accommodate the crossings. J. Diaz presented traffic study results for this intersection as well based on the two Netherlands Rd. options.

### ***Riverway Ramp Access/Route 9/River Rd./Pond Ave.***

- J. Diaz discussed how the Gateway East project will change the Brookline Ave. and Route 9 crossing, and the implications for River Rd. and the Riverway ramp access. He explained how their traffic counts do not support making River Rd. one-way. He also explained why a closure of the off ramp from Riverway to Pond Ave. would not work. He later presented traffic study results comparing the various options.
- J. Diaz reviewed their recommended plan for the Route 9/River Rd./Pond Ave. area, including widening the Route 9 median and adjusting the configuration and adding raised crossings at Pond Ave., as well as other suggestions. Their recommendations don't change any of the proposed design for Gateway East.
- Route 9 would have either a signalized pedestrian crossing or an unsignalized alternative with a staggered crosswalk. J. Diaz said they don't think a signal would negatively affect Huntington Ave. or Gateway East. J. Diaz presented a limited construction plan which retains Pond Ave. and ramps alignment.
- J. Diaz presented a bridge crossing options with a shared use path and potential lane widths and shoulders. He discussed why a crossing at the Jamaicaway ramp is not safe and their suggestions for landscaping or even fencing for a crash barrier. Phil Goff, Senior Planner with Alta Planning + Design, discussed letting bikes use the road in this area and their conclusion that this would not be safe based on traffic speed, volumes and sightlines.

### ***Construction Costs Summary***

J. Diaz reviewed an order of magnitude construction cost summary, including civil construction and landscape enhancements, and finally total construction costs, for all of the crossings and options where applicable.

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

#### ***Committee Comment***

J. Mermell asked for comments from the Committee members, and a summary follows.

- P. Kish asked if the Netherlands Rd. closure and the addition of a turning lane would have 3,000 sq. ft. net gain of parkland, and J. Diaz said yes. She said it's great to see options for Netherlands Rd. including the one-way option, and DCR would be supportive of closure if they could get more information on the right turn lane, grades, and impacts on the pedestrian crossings across the Riverway.
- G. Driessen said he appreciates all the work, especially at Aspinwall where he was concerned about the elevations. He said he is still concerned about potential backups on either side of Route 9 and asked if there was data on 50 or 95% queues at the crossings. J. Diaz said yes since a complete analysis was done, and he can provide the information.
- K. Bowditch asked if R. Kefalas had received her stormwater suggestions memo, which he had. She thanked the consultants and said the overall efforts are great, and asked for stormwater issues, impacts and solutions to be addressed in detail at a future meeting. J. Diaz said this will be done for the Route 9 crossing, but not necessarily for the other crossings, which are focused just on configurations, etc. during this process. M. Pressley commented that many of the changes provide more soft space versus hard space.

- J. Crockford said she had walked the study area with several different people and the connectivity of the whole system was discussed. She said she understands the proposed Route 9 crossing, but asked for the plans to not ignore the long-term possibility of a path along the Riverway. She said the group should think long and hard about the addition of a right turn lane only and the tradeoffs. She thanked the consultants for their presentation.
- L. Hamlin asked how much money was available for the project now and how to realistically phase the project. She said the Route 9 crossing may even be more than what is available. J. Diaz explained that a Route 9 crossing could be completed for \$600k, but without the Pond Ave. realignment. E. Gallentine discussed working with partners to implement the other crossings, phasing in the project over time, and the benefit of having a plan for all the crossings now and taking the opportunity to look at the whole area at once.
- K. Geist said she is in favor of option 2 on Netherlands Rd. (full closure) particularly since it has the shortest distances of all the connections, and that she uses the area constantly as does the group she represents. She asked what would determine which option is selected. E. Gallentine said they will look at traffic with the Transportation Division, will consider parkland lost versus gained, and will need buy in from the Mayor of Boston and DCR, but this committee can make a recommendation.
- T. Vitolo asked if the new right hand turn lane, which is allocated for 12 feet, could be smaller, for example by removing a small amount off each existing lane or the new lane, and keeping a low speed limit. For Netherlands Rd., he said if it is only closed one-way, bikes will use the crosswalks, but pedestrians will not use them and will use a diagonal desire line instead. He suggested moving the DPW garage entrance further south and the crosswalk further south. For the Pond Ave. “t” at Washington St. he suggested changes to the configuration to accommodate desire lines, tightening the intersection, and removing the refuge island. He also suggested splitting the on/off ramp and keeping parkland between them resulting in one less crossing. For River Rd., he said the proposed median may not work for trucks and deliveries and suggested asking P. Ditto, Director of Transportation and Engineering, whether the sidewalk behind the businesses is private since pedestrians don’t use it and it is obstructed anyways.
- R. Daves thanked the consultants for the hard work, and asked if they are considering truck traffic and turning radii. J. Diaz said yes, and explained for example that the turn onto Pond Ave. must be curved so vehicles don’t encroach. He said the crosswalks can be straightened, but the tradeoff is that pedestrians will face traffic less. R. Daves discussed connecting through the park as a linear system and having a vision for the bridle path off River Rd. too. M. Pressley noted that this is in Boston and though there has always been a vision and even two existing shelves to put those paths back in, there isn’t money available. J. Crockford asked if there is room to add a right turn lane and both paths, and M. Pressley said she is concerned about this since there may not be room.
- A. Mattison said she is sensitive to M. Pressley’s comments regarding the path system on the Boston side of the park, and she would like to hear further discussion about narrowing the park and the implications. She asked if addition of the turning lane would be entirely on DCR land or also on Boston land, and P. Kish explained why it would be on DCR land.

***Public Comment***

J. Mermell asked for comments from the public, and a summary follows.

- Pete Stidman, Boston Cyclists Union, said he agreed with the stormwater comments, and commented that materials for stormwater management are excellent. He asked if there could be more raised crosswalks, especially at River Rd. and also the on/off ramps at Route 9. He suggested looking at and factoring in future (vehicular) traffic projections and trends, which he sees as stabilizing and not increasing exponentially.
- Hugh Mattison, resident on Pond Ave., suggested having a raised crosswalk whenever crossing a ramp, for example at Parkway Rd. He asked if the volumes at Brookline Ave. and the Riverway were adjusted for the Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH) expansion, and J. Diaz said yes. H. Mattison asked about costs for a traffic light at Parkway Rd. and whether it was necessary or could be eliminated, which could save money, and moving the bike path along River Rd. He noted some stipulations in the final Environmental Impact Report for BWH that may facilitate working with Boston in the future or now for bike lane mitigation.
- Jeffrey Ferris, Emerald Necklace Conservancy Access Committee, said he prefers closing Netherlands Rd. completely, and that there is merit in considering a right turn lane. He thinks there is room for this lane and if a paved bridle path is added, bike accommodations on Brookline Ave. are not needed. He agreed with the idea of splitting the on/off ramps at the Riverway and Pond Ave. and closing the entryway from River Rd. to the Riverway. He discussed a proposed layout with these and other related changes. He also suggested making River Rd. one-way southbound for building access, and changing the line of the flood control berm and moving the path inside the park and restoring the park outside this.
- Anne Lusk, Harvard School of Public Health and Brookline resident, said the consultants had done a phenomenal job with the parkland, trees and parking analysis, but she said the bike facilities are essentially a park element and need more attention and detailed analyses, for example with queues, waiting times, and turns. She said the bike facilities should be consistent and should keep bikes and pedestrians separate, versus the current mix on the road, sometimes with pedestrians, and sometimes alone. She said the plans need to accommodate future growth, especially in the Longwood area.
- Peter Furth, Brookline resident, said he favors closing Netherlands Rd. since it is dangerous especially where it intersects with the Riverway. This would also mean that Parkway Rd. would have almost no traffic and it could save money. He said he doesn't think that traffic mitigation or accommodating any back up of cars is required for a public project like this, and he specifically doesn't feel it is a necessity to mitigate for traffic on the Riverway. He made some suggestions for how to accommodate people crossing at Brookline Ave. if the bridle path goes in. He suggested making River Rd. one-way northbound and noted that all the businesses also front Brookline Ave. For the bridge crossing option for Route 9 he asked that the path and path width be given careful consideration including an appropriate shoulder. He suggested closing off ramps from Riverway to Pond Ave., and discussed an alternate route for cars and the benefits for the path system. He suggested that if there is a new lane on Route 9, it doesn't need to start at Pond Ave., but could be after the bridge crossing, since cars can wait, and then pedestrians and bikes will have a shorter crossing.
- Andrew Fischer, TMM 13 and former President of Mass Bikes, agreed with P. Furth and A. Lusk and suggested treating the bikes traffic in the same manner as car traffic. He noted that the Longwood medical area is a prime biking destination in town. He expressed concern that the bridge crossing and path at the Pond Ave. ramp would be a real hairpin turn. He said that bikes, pedestrians, and other park users don't necessarily have to yield to cars in

terms of mitigation, and cars should yield to them. He explained some legislation he has proposed related to recognizing bikers in crosswalks in the same way that pedestrians are recognized if they are hit, and asked the committee to support the legislation to the extent that they can. He discussed some of the history of bikes and crossings in the area and Brookline's receptiveness and how to move forward.

- Sarah Freeman, Arborway Coalition and Jamaica Plain resident, echoed the thrill of this project and addressing the issues. She suggested removing a chain link fence by the cement wall on River Rd. since it is falling apart and blocks the water from view. She commented on the crossings and paths as a meaningful part of the parks.

### **Conclusion**

J. Mermell thanked everyone for their constructive comments. E. Gallentine said the next meeting would be 4/4/12 at 6 p.m. (NOTE: meeting was later postponed till 6/6/12). She said the next steps would be incorporating the comments from this meeting and determining what is feasible, evaluating the options further, meeting with Boston and DCR engineers, ensuring designs are compatible with Gateway East, incorporating stormwater management particularly into the Route 9 crossings, and updating the cost estimates as needed. J. Ferris and A. Lusk asked if the consultants would consider their respective comments about an alternate configuration for the paths and crossings around Route 9, and detailed bike analyses and separating bikes and pedestrians. E. Gallentine said some of this is beyond the scope of the work, and the preference is to split paths, but this is not always feasible. P. Stidman asked again about limiting access to the River Rd. and the backside of the businesses that front Brookline Ave. J. Mermell asked for Engineering/Transportation to look into whether there are any restrictions to this. J. Mermell thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting.

### Documents Used at the Meeting:

- Meeting agenda
- Draft minutes from 1/4/12
- Presentation prepared by GPI, 3/7/12 and handouts of several slides

Submitted by H. Lis.