

Dear Secretary Mullan:

June 27, 2010

Thank you for your continuing endorsement of extending the popular Community Path in conjunction with the Green Line Extension (GLX). Your support builds on the vision of the Southwest Corridor Park, fully meets MassDOT's GreenDOT sustainable and active transportation goals and will increase Green Line ridership at a low per rider cost. This has been demonstrated by the success of the existing Path in Cambridge and Somerville that brings thousands of residents to the Davis Square Red Line Station where boardings are almost double what were projected.

The GLX does not include parking structures and the Path will be critical to bringing patrons to the new stations from the neighborhoods. It is not only integral to the GLX project but also the only missing link in connecting the Minuteman Trail to downtown Boston. In addition, the New England office of the Federal Transit Authority has indicated that including the Community Path in the Green Line Extension application for New Starts funding would help our competitiveness.

MassDOT's agreement to design the Path to Inner Belt Road is a major commitment that is critically important because the Path and the GLX will share the same corridor and infrastructure such as retaining walls and underpasses and must therefore be constructed together or it will not be logistically or cost-effective to ever build it. However, because of funding constraints, the design from Inner Belt to North Point and actual construction of the Path components of this combined project are presently not funded or under consideration by MassDOT as part of the GLX project (although the just released GLX FEIR gives much more deference to the Path than the DEIR).

Therefore, while we are very pleased that MassDOT has recently given approval and support for Somerville's TIGER II grant application to help fund the Community Path components, we still need your leadership and personal intervention to ensure that this vital and universally supported active transportation corridor is actually constructed.

While we recognize the Commonwealth's serious financial situation, we urge you to:

- Expand the commitment to design the Community Path to reach Lechmere/North Point.
- Make the commitment that the Community Path extension is part of the Green Line project even while full funding is still being identified.
- Include the construction of the Community Path extension infrastructure components, in the Design/Build contract and, as eligible, in the FTA New Starts funding application.
- Co-sponsor the Tiger II grant application with the City of Somerville to fund the Community Path elements of the GLX and help fund the 20% match.
- Continue to work with Somerville to apply for other funds for Community Path construction such as the proposed Active Community Transportation Act of 2010, House Bill 4722.

We are committed to working with MassDOT on this critical active transportation and transit corridor project and to identify and obtain other funding to minimize the State's direct contribution to the Path. May we please have a brief meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss this further? We will call your staff on Wednesday, June 30 in the hope that we can schedule such a meeting. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Alan Moore and Lynn Weissman of the Friends of the Community Path
Ellin Reisner, STEP
David Watson, MassBike
Steve Miller, Livable Streets Alliance
Wendy Landman, WalkBoston
Jennifer Lawrence, Groundworks Somerville

Supporting information and links.

- The Green Line extension does not include parking structures. The Path will enhance T-ridership on the Green Line in a **cost-effective** way as it provides access to stations from the neighborhoods and is therefore integral to the stations. Between stations, the parallel Path will allow a larger catchment area because of the more pleasant and direct route it will provide.
- As in Davis Square, where > **60% of the residents use public transportation** and thousands walk and bike to the station each day along the Community Path, the extension will provide the same off-street and pleasant pedestrian/bike access to four of the new Green Line stations, increasing ridership.
- Local precedence for **active transportation paths** being funded with federal and state transit money includes the Linear Path/Community Path over the Red Line to Alewife and the Southwest Corridor path along the Orange Line as you recently proudly pointed out at its 20th anniversary.
- There is significant regional support for completing the Community Path because it will connect many dozens of miles of **regional greenways** and paths in the region (such as the 13-mile Minuteman Bikeway from Bedford, Lexington, Arlington, and Cambridge; the Watertown branch trail; the Alewife Brook Paths; and Mystic River trails from Medford) to downtown Boston and the Charles River paths. The Path will also be the eastern end of the 104-mile cross-state Mass Central Rail Trail to Northampton.
- The Commonwealth's **Healthy Transportation Compact** directs MassDOT and other agencies to "Develop policies to create a transportation system that increases opportunities for physical activity — particularly safe bicycle and pedestrian travel along and across roadways in urban and suburban areas". The Path is a perfect example of a Green Transportation Corridor that meets all these goals.
- MassDOT's "**GreenDOT**" campaign aims at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting healthy transportation alternatives and supporting smart growth development by incorporating sustainability into all of its activities, from strategic planning to project design and construction. The Community Path will be the first legacy of this campaign.
- In a similar project, the proposed light-rail **Purple Line and Capital Crescent trail** in Maryland, their final environmental impact statement stated "*The construction of the Capital Crescent Trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring is part of the Purple Line.*"
http://purplelinemd.com/images/stories/purpleline_documents/deis/deis/10_chapter5.pdf
- The federal Department of Transportation's interagency **Partnership for Sustainable Communities** policy is to "develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health."
- Regarding **FTA New Starts funding**, the Federal Register (58680) already says: "FTA grantees may use any of the following programs to fund capital projects for pedestrian and bicycle access to a public transportation facility: Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program Section 5309 New Starts and Small Starts Major Capital Investment Programs".
- The New England office of the Federal Transit Authority has indicated that including the Community Path in the Green Line Extension application for **New Starts** funding would help our **competitiveness**.

- The **cost** for the “additional” Community Path elements has been estimated by MassDOT’s consultants at \$16 million, not including land acquisition, environmental or bridge costs to cross the Fitchburg line. Assuming these additional costs will bring the total costs over \$20 million, this is about 1.5% -2 % of overall GLX project costs. At present there is \$3.5 million in CMAQ funding and \$1 million in SAFETEA-LU funds reserved in the 2010 – 2013 TIP for the Path. It will cost much more (if even possible) to construct the Path extension as a separate project, yielding the grim possibility that the Community Path extension may never get built.
- **TIGER II funding** will require a lower State match (20% vs. 50%) for the Community Path than the New Starts funding source. MassDOT is committed to completing the Green Line by the end of 2014 and is beginning the engineering design soon. The March 22, 2010 schedule prepared by VHB shows that the Final Design will be 50% complete by the September 2012 deadline to obligate the a TIGER II grant award.
- The **Active Community Transportation Act of 2010** <http://tinyurl.com/yj72ghv> will make more funds available for the Community Path and connecting trails and greenways.
- The Federal DOT’s new **Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation** Regulations and Recommendations emphasizes multi-model transportation systems and Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood has stated that: *This is the end of favoring motorized transportation at the expense of non-motorized.*”
- On January 15, Secretary of Energy & Environmental Affairs Ian Bowles accepted MassDOT's Draft **Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR)** for the Green Line Extension Project with this comment: *Lastly, I strongly encourage MassDOT and the City of Somerville to work together to seek State and federal funding opportunities to facilitate construction of the Community Path concurrently with the project.*