



Friends of the Community Path
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March 22, 2011

Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
Transportation Planning and Programming Committee
Attn: TIP Manager Hayes Morrison
hayesm@bostonmpo.org

Re: March 22, 2011 comment deadline on Draft Amendment Three, FFY 2011 TIP Element

To Ms. Hayes Morrison and the MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee:

We are respectfully submitting this letter as a modification to our February 18 written comments regarding the re-allocation of \$3.5 in CMAQ funding in the FY2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding from the Community Path connector to the Assembly Square Orange Line station project, via a proposed Draft Amendment Three to the 2011-2014 TIP.

In summary, please consider:

- (1) Funding the Cedar to Lowell Street section of the Community Path (ID http://www.bostonmpo.org/bostonmpo/3_programs/2_tip/2011_TIP_Handbook.pdf 604331) in the 2012 TIP as needed and,**
- (2) Allocating additional funding to further extend Community Path connector in future TIPs, depending on the Green Line Extension (GLX) design and construction schedule and level of other federal and State funding.**
- (3) Including funding and a high priority for the completion of the Community Path connector from Lowell Street (Somerville) to Lechmere/NorthPoint (Cambridge) in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that is being prepared.**

We understand the reasoning for the re-allocation of the 2011 TIP funds, since the Community Path extension is not ready to be constructed and the Assembly Square Orange Line station is ready. However, we are very concerned about this loss in funding, as significant funding is still needed to complete the Community Path extension in conjunction with the GLX.

Cedar-to-Lowell Section

We anticipate that the design for this first phase of the Community Path extension, led by the City of Somerville, will be completed such that a construction contract can be signed prior to the 2012 Fiscal Year. This ¼-mile section will include an ADA-compliant bicycle and pedestrian connection from the lower Path to the higher Lowell Street. Hence, construction costs are preliminarily estimated to be at least \$1.7 million, which includes a standard level of contingency fee. Therefore, we request that the MPO allocate sufficient construction funding for this Cedar Street to Lowell Street section in the 2012 TIP through the \$1 million earmark already programmed in the 2011 TIP, the Clean Air and Mobility grant program (\$500,000 requested) and/or any other available funding

Beyond Lowell Street

As mentioned above, we understand that the Assembly Square Orange Line Station project is ready to use the \$3.5 million in designated TIP funding for FY2011, while the Community Path connector project is not ready, due to various factors such as concurrent Green Line extension planning and engineering. The Friends of the Community Path recognize the benefits of funding a vital public transit project, the Assembly Square Orange Line station.

We request that the loss of TIP funding for the Community Path connector from Lowell Street eastwards at this time, and hope that it can be re-allocated in the future when the Community Path project is ready to make use of the funding. We hope that the MPO will also consider increasing funding for a longer section of this long-awaited, zero-emissions multi-purpose transportation improvement project, and including the entire 2.3-mile project in the LRTP. The Community Path connector project will eventually link the Minuteman Bikeway and Charles River path networks.

The Green Line Extension design and engineering phase is commencing very soon – including the Community Path. MassDOT has said they will fund 100% design of the Community Path from Lowell Street to Inner Belt, concurrent with the Green Line extension. We hope that the next section, Lowell Street to-School Street, could be ready for construction as soon as FY 2014. We also hope in the future that MassDOT will decide to design the last 1/3-mile of the Path, from Inner Belt to Lechmere-North Point.

We believe that the Community Path project will score well on the MPO's revised TIP evaluation criteria. Additionally, everyone from local communities to businesses to MassDOT seems to want the Path extension. There are no detractors to delay the project!

TIP funding to extend the Community Path certainly will yield local community benefits and access to the coming Green Line stations. However, there is also tremendous regional significance of each section of the Community Path. The full 2½-mile Community Path extension will not just be a little path through Somerville. Rather, the Community Path will eventually

- Serve as connector for the Minuteman Bikeway and the Charles River (dozens of miles of path network) and all of the cities/town along those path networks: Bedford, Lexington, Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge, Somerville, and Medford to the Red and Green Lines (in Cambridge and Somerville) and to Boston, Watertown, Waltham, and Newton. This will make for over 40 miles of continuous path network.

- Be used as a transportation corridor by pedestrians, cyclists, skaters, wheelchairs, etc. to the Green Line stations.
- Harness the synergy of these zero-emissions transportation modes with mass transit, by increasing Green Line extension ridership at a low cost per rider.
- Bring this Path connector through the East Somerville segment around Inner Belt has the densest environmental justice and car-less household populations of any segment. It seems incongruous that this area would be among the only neighborhoods with no direct Path access -- as compared to the other more affluent communities that already have access to the Minuteman and Charles River path.

We hope our public comments have presented the regional significance, strengths, and future need for the Community Path. We invite the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee to support what is possible on this multi-modal path connector now and to re-program TIP funding for the Community Path connector when the time is right.

We appreciate this opportunity make public comments and thankfully acknowledge the past support of the MPO.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Lynn Weissman and Alan Moore
Co-Presidents, Friends of the Community Path

“To Lechmere – and beyond!”

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