

May 3, 2019

TO: constituent.services@state.ma.us

Dear Governor Baker:

We would like to thank you for your continued strong support for multi-use trails and for your efforts to establish a comprehensive regional path network. The Mystic River Watershed Association is a strong advocate for the Community Path Extension (CPX) being designed and built as part of the Green Line Extension (GLX) project.

MyRWA is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the Mystic River Watershed. We are working to create a 25-mile network of paths from the Mystic Lakes to Boston Harbor. These active transportation and recreation routes will improve public health, the environment, and economy of Mystic River communities. In addition to the Minuteman and Northern Strand, the Community Path is one of the most important regional greenway links that complements the Mystic River Greenways.

We are **extremely concerned that the 10’ path width in the present design of the CPX** (including the ~3,000’ stretch from East Somerville station to the path at Cambridge Crossing, which has no rest areas or exit points) **is not sufficiently wide to accommodate the anticipated high volume of pedestrian and cyclist use.**  As such, the CPX is not being designed according to State and federal engineering standards to allow safe passing. Therefore, we are writing to urge you and your staff to direct MassDOT and MBTA staff and design consultants to **widen the Community Path Extension that will be built as part of the GLX project.**

The CPX, in its current design, measures only 10’-0” in paved width.  However, as described below, this 10’ path width does not meet federal or State standards for path width based on Peak Use -- although MassDOT Highway and FHWA require that multi-use paths designed or constructed with state or federal funds follow the federal [design standards of AASHTO](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/nq/ch-11.pdf).

We believe that the Peak Use of the CPX is likely to surpass even 400 Bikes+Peds/Hour, given that:

* Additional direct connectivity to Cambridge Crossing and Kendall Square (via the Grand Junction Path) -- two major employment centers with strict single occupancy vehicle reduction needs.  The synergy with the Grand Junction path was not anticipated at the time of the 2013 MAPC Study.
* The desirability of the CPX route, synergy with connecting paths, and simultaneous lack of an alternate safe, off-road bike/ped route through these dense areas.

For these reasons,we feel that it is **incumbent upon MassDOT to require a minimum paved width of 11”- 14” (rather than 10’ as per current plans) with at least 2’ shoulders (where physically possible) for the CPX**. Most other multi-use paths recently built or under design in Massachusetts, even with lower use than the CPX, are 11’ – 15’ paved (plus 2 - 3’ shoulders on each side). A multi-use path needs a minimum width of 11’ for a cyclist or wheelchair to safely pass two pedestrians or cyclists, or to allow safe passing in one direction when another path user approaches heading the opposite direction.

**Failure to provide a CPX which, at minimum, measures 11’ in width will result in an increase in conflict and collisions**, which may prove dangerous and even life threatening for users of the CPX, especially vulnerable users. Without these minimums, we will see more collisions that could result in fatalities, such as the one on the Minuteman Bikeway earlier this year.

We understand the imperative to complete the GLX project on time and within budget. Still, we urge MassDOT to allocate additional funding for the CPX, as it routinely does for other State projects, and to redress the lost costs from the State stopping and re-starting the GLX with a new team, and the associated cost inflation due to that project delay. Furthermore, this **region of Greater Boston has some of the high population densities and environmental justice communities.** In order to reverse these inequities, the state must maintain, if not elevate, the standards and funding levels devoted to other communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to ensure that the CPX meets federal and state safety requirements for multi-use paths based on peak use. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact the undersigned. Thank you for your consideration.



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