



Mystic Lakes Path Improvements Project

Visioning Engagement Summary

March 12, 2024

The Mystic River Watershed Association, in partnership with Halvorson | Tighe & Bond Studio and Kittleson & Associates (the “Project Team”), conducted community engagement with members of the public to produce a vision for the conceptual design of the Mystic Lakes Path Improvements Project, which aims to provide universally accessible recreation opportunities along, and improve the ecological health of, the Mystic Lakes and their eastern shoreline.

The following engagement activities took place during the course of Winter, 2024:

Date	Time (if applicable)	Format	Number of Participants
Monday, January 29th	6 PM - 7:30 PM	Resident Steering Committee Meeting #1	10
Tuesday, February 13th	6 PM - 7:30 PM	Public Meeting #1	102
February 13th - March 5th		Online Survey	56
Total			168

Visioning Exercise

Engagement participants were asked to share their responses to four questions about the current and potential future of the Mystic Lakes Path project area:

1. What do you currently like?
2. What do you currently not like?

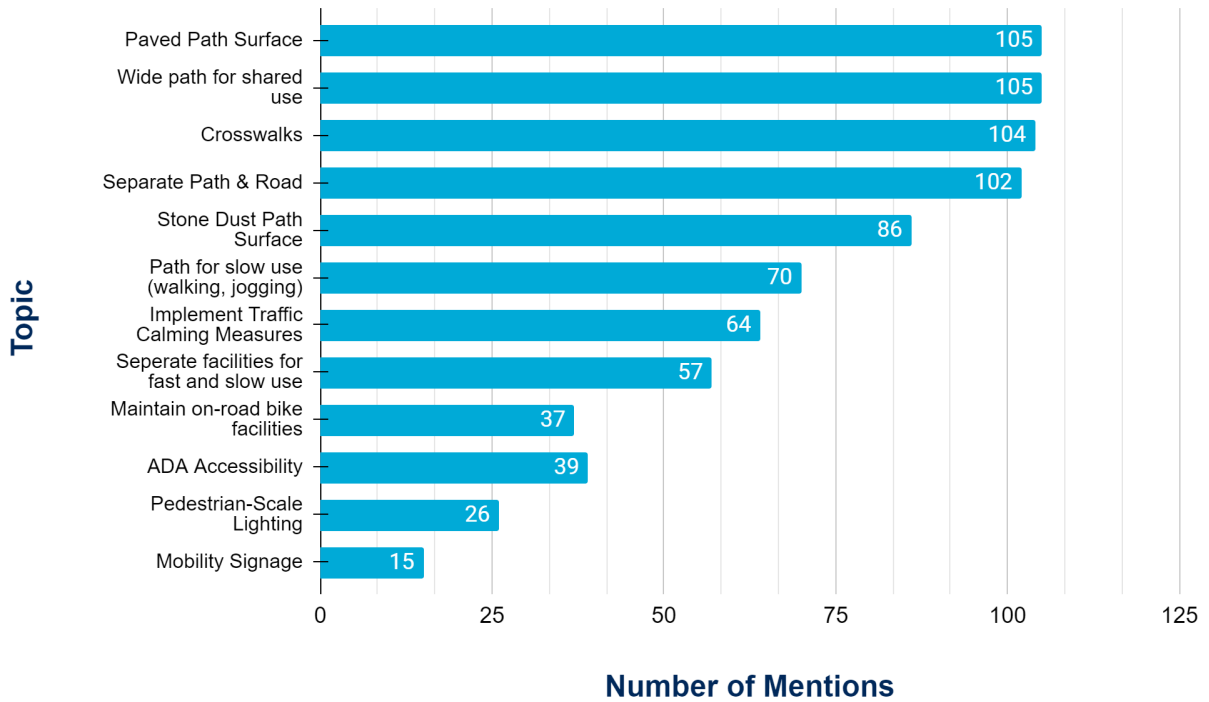
3. What would you like to see that currently does not exist?
4. What do you think we should avoid?

As the questions were open-ended, responses to these questions were grouped into “topics”, and listed in descending order by number of times mentioned. The topics were then placed under three design categories for the design team to consider: mobility, recreation and environment.

A summary of visioning exercise results, broken out by category, is as follows:

Category #1: Mobility

Themes: safety, accessibility, limiting environmental impact



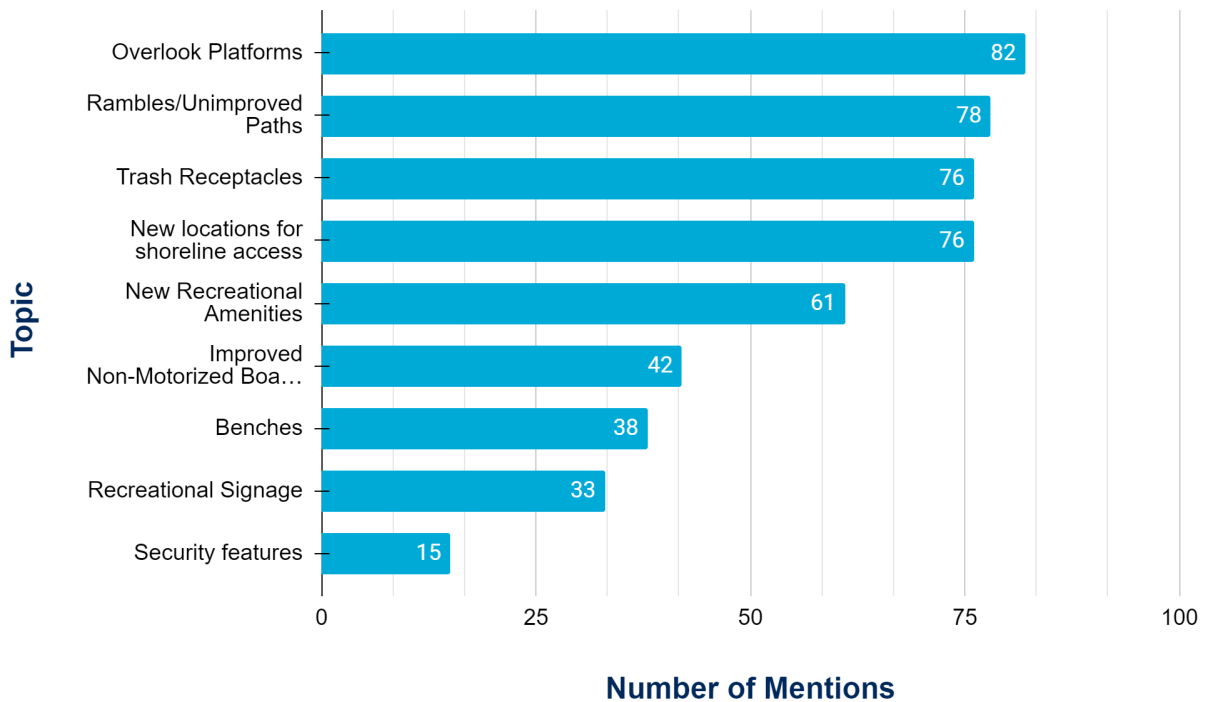
Detailed Comments - Mobility

- Implement new crosswalks at Sagamore Ave, Ravine Rd, Pine Ridge Road, the access road at Mystic Lakes dam, and Wedgemere Station
- Evenly-split opinion between hard and soft path surface materials, with some suggestions for pervious pavement and not using bricks/pavers
- Design considerations for path maintenance, including tree roots, flooding, and snow removal
- Strong desire to align the path away from the roadway as close to the shoreline as possible while limiting ecological impacts

- Separate the roadway and path with a green buffer (including new trees, distributed “organically”) and vertical delineation (curb and/or wooden/decorative barrier) along the entire route
- Widening the path will allow for users to have adequate space for safe, comfortable passing and group travel
- Maintain on-road bike facilities for fast-moving cyclists and e-mobility devices (e-bikes, e-scooters, etc.), but do not use plastic bollards to separate them from vehicles
- Reduce vehicle speeds on Mystic Valley Parkway, with small but mixed opinion on the installation of raised calming treatments
- Some concern for excess blinking light signals
- Avoid placing stones immediately adjacent to the path (tripping hazard) and having tight/blind curves (visibility)
- Strong desire for pedestrian-scale lighting that is decorative in design, similar to the lighting that already exists on the Winchester portion
- Install multilingual signage: wayfinding/directional, distance markers, “Mystic Lakes State Park” welcome signage

Category #2: Recreation

Themes: limiting human impact, nature-based exploration, safety

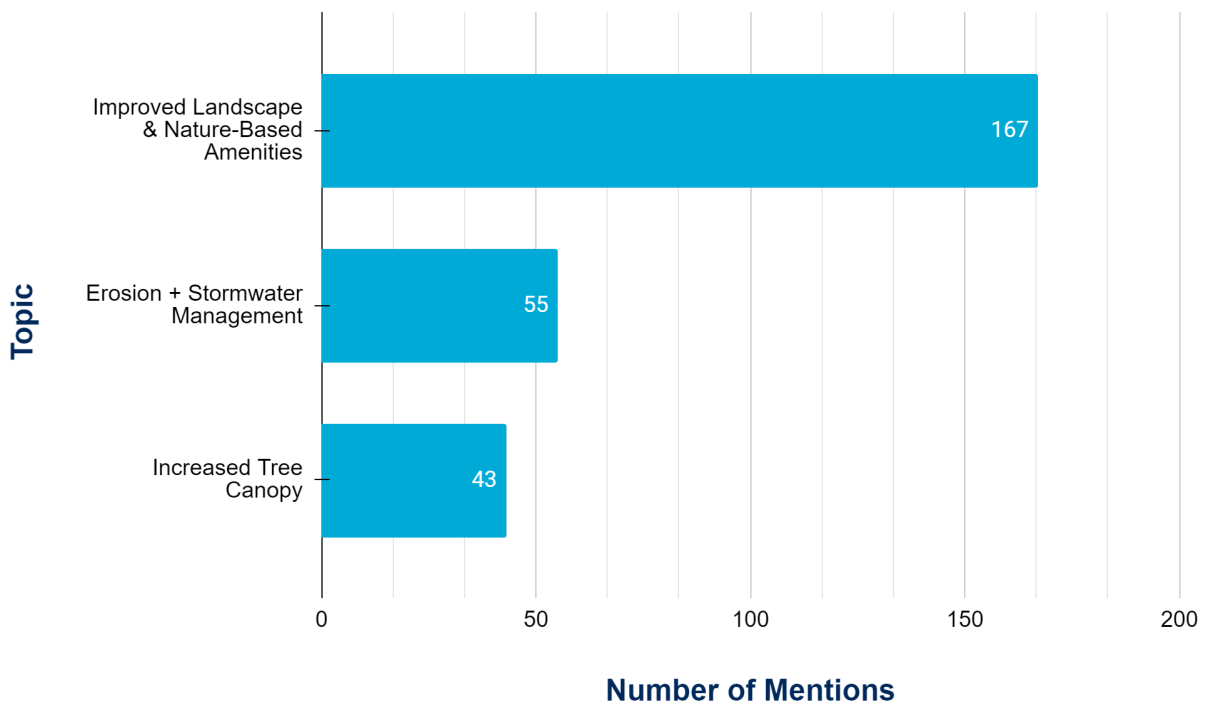


Additional Comments - Recreation

- Install trash receptacles at every location where picnicking may occur
- Designing specific locations for new access to the shoreline will reduce erosion and human impact at other locations. New access locations should have hand railings.
- Creating trail junctions with the existing “rambles” into wooded areas will reduce human impact at other locations
- Provide a natural surface “ramble” along the shoreline, where possible, to promote hiking experiences and a closer connection to nature
- Overlook platforms that will offer opportunities for birding, fishing, observational viewing, photography, educational/interpretive exhibits, and seating
- ADA-compliant benches with views of the water and space alongside for wheelchairs
- Put-in for non-motorized boats (canoes, kayaks, paddleboards)
- Install safety stations (call boxes, AED device, flotation devices)
- Install multilingual signage: Interpretive/educational (nature, history), How to take care of the environment (fishing, litter), swim/general safety
- Recreational amenities suggested: Cooling stations (water fountain, misting), bike parking, public restroom and picnicking area south of the dam, hammock poles, public art installations, play equipment, BlueBikes station, and a bird blind

Category #3: Environment

Themes: ecological restoration, habitat promotion



Additional Comments - Environment

- Utilize landscape design elements embodied by Olmsted and Eliot that would retain their initial vision for the parkway
- Increase the tree canopy in an “organic” pattern and not in rows, providing optimal shade and foliage, as well as potentially fruit trees
- Protect marshland/wetland
- Stormwater management practices that will reduce runoff, potentially with bioswales
- Remove invasive species and poison ivy and replace with native species
- Install bird and bat boxes

Additional Considerations

- Parking management continues to be of great concern to many visitors to Mystic Lakes State Park. The Project Team should take into consideration design features that will improve parking behaviors, such as limiting illegal turning movements, vehicle idling, and driving on the new path.
- Many responses highlighted the dangerous mobility conditions, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, at the High Street Rotary. The rotary is being redesigned as part of [MassDOT Project 613593](#).
- Some responses called for greater operational considerations to promote appropriate use of Mystic Lakes State Parks facilities (e.g. parking, jet skis, alcohol)
- Some responses called for greater efforts to improve water quality in an effort to improve ecosystem services (e.g. flora/fauna, swimming)
- Recreational amenities mentioned that were outside of the scope of the project include: community garden, frisbee golf, boardwalks, splash pads, programming (classes, concerts, etc.)