



March 7, 2018

Commissioner Leo Roy
Department of Conservation and Recreation

Re: Mystic Pedestrian and Bicycle Comments

Dear Commissioner Roy,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Mystic River Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossing. We commend the DCR and consultants in their efforts to create an efficient and aesthetically-pleasing design that is informed by and complements public infrastructure improvement projects in the vicinity.

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the Mystic River Watershed. This includes working to improve the water quality in the Mystic River and all of its tributaries and promoting public access through the formation of continuous greenways that provide recreation and transportation opportunities. We believe that these efforts will improve public health, the environment, and economy of Mystic River communities.

The proposed pedestrian and bike bridge will **provide a much-needed connection between Somerville and Everett, help to complete the 20-mile Mystic Greenways network, connect dozens of North Shore cities with downtown Boston, and close a critical gap in the 2,900-mile East Coast Greenway.** The connection would provide numerous benefits not just for Somerville and Everett but for the entire surrounding region by:

- Unifying both sides of the Mystic River park system
- Connecting Somerville's recently rebuilt Sylvester Baxter Park, planned Draw 7 Park Redesign and the in-progress path along the MBTA seawall to the new parks and paths along Everett's waterfront
- Unlocking high-capacity transit access to the Orange Line and promoting walking and biking, thus reducing automobile trips and reducing vehicular traffic

The proposed design concept balances utility with aesthetics – providing direct connections to the Mystic River paths and to the Orange Line while creating a unique structure that adds to the design identity of the Lower Mystic. We do however, want to echo the sentiment that **projected daily counts are likely understated** – we believe that many more pedestrians and cyclists will be using this bridge. We would also advocate for a **minimal lighting scheme that enhances safety and design elements, while not contributing additional light pollution to a highly urbanized area.** Lighting on the in-water structures may not be necessary and could have an effect on Herring populations travelling through the Mystic, now the largest migration in the state.

Lastly, we would like to **reiterate the importance of public-private partnerships in funding this type of infrastructure.** As Dante Ramos stated in his Boston Globe article from February 23, 2018:

“Even as everyone pays lip service to the need for carbon-free transportation — and even as we enjoy the fruits of past investments on the Charles River Esplanade and elsewhere — we’re treating tomorrow’s green infrastructure like an optional frill, to be funded by voluntary contributions from rich abutters.”



Three pedestrian bridges, similar in scale to this one, have been built or are in-progress along the Charles River (North Bank, South Bank, Fanny Appleton/Longfellow), totaling at least \$50 million. We ask that the same investments be made in the Mystic River, a region with the highest population densities and environmental justice communities.

In closing, we are supportive of this important transportation improvement project and would like to be notified of future design and permitting milestones. If you have any questions or require additional information please contact MyRWA at (781) 316-3438 or by emailing patrick@mysticriver.org.

Thank you for your consideration.

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CC:

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