



WalkBoston

September 12, 2005

John Cogliano
Secretary of Transportation
Executive Office of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3170
Boston, MA 02116

RE: Comments on the Commonwealth's Draft 20-Year Transportation Framework

Dear Secretary Cogliano:

WalkBoston is New England's premier pedestrian advocacy organization, with members from 75 eastern Massachusetts cities and towns. We promote walking for transportation, health and recreation, and work to create and preserve safe and attractive walking environments that build healthy communities. We work with organizations throughout the metropolitan area and around the state. With our colleagues in America Walks, we play a national role on pedestrian matters.

Walking is the most ancient and universal form of travel, and is an important form of exercise and recreation. Every trip involves walking, alone or in combination with public transit, driving or cycling.¹ In Massachusetts, walking is the second most used transportation mode. WalkBoston believes state planning should strongly reflect the needs of pedestrians because walking makes significant contributions to our health, the environment, and an effective transportation system.

The Commonwealth's 20-year draft transportation plan, *A Framework for Thinking – A Plan for Action* (the Framework), incorporates many of the ideas that have been talked about in the years since the last plan. The focus on "Fix-It First" and on transit development and support is excellent. We have great expectations for the Commonwealth's plans for smart growth near public transit lines. The Framework notes many reasons that walking is important to the Commonwealth, provides interesting data about the importance of serving pedestrians, and sets forth admirable goals:

"Ten years ago, *Accessing the Future* noted the importance of incorporating bicycling and pedestrian safety into the design, construction, and maintenance of roadways and bridges; today, bicycling and walking safety and mobility are recognized as components of **all** projects." (emphasis added) *Chapter 1: First Principles/The Foundations of Transportation Decision-Making in Massachusetts, Page 10*

Notwithstanding these admirable qualities, we think the Framework does not go far enough on issues of concern to pedestrians. It lacks goals and commitments comparable to those for bicycles and vehicles. Without them, and the commitment to meet them, progress is unlikely.

¹ Courtesy of the Toronto Pedestrian Charter, 2002

What is missing from the Framework?

WalkBoston recommends augmenting the Framework with specific pedestrian elements that provide support for daily, utilitarian walking facilities and programs. There must be specific information about how the state will guide and implement widespread pedestrian access improvements. Our comments focus on that need.

In addition to general policy guidance, the Framework must provide implementation strategies for the next decade and beyond. Agencies and municipalities need to know what to expect from the state with respect to pedestrian priorities and funding. The Framework should set parameters for upcoming revisions to the statewide pedestrian plan. The pedestrian plan can then outline specific projects and programs that will fall to state agencies, to municipalities and to the private sector.

Below are commitments we would like to see in the Framework.

Capital Spending Policies

- Include pedestrian improvements in all long-term roadway and transit projects. Since walking is a major mode of transportation in Massachusetts, it must be treated as such. Pedestrian improvements -- sidewalks, crosswalks, well-timed walk/don't walk signals, and traffic calming -- must be included in all non-National Highway System roadway and transit improvements as integral parts (not as afterthoughts or as separate projects). A percentage of capital dollars must be set aside for pedestrian improvements.
- Include pedestrian facilities in Fix-It-First projects. It is crucial to include basic pedestrian improvements in the Fix-It-First element of the roadway system. Over time, implementation of this policy will yield a complete and safe pedestrian infrastructure throughout the state. Pedestrian networks can be built gradually as were the Interstates -- piece by piece. We need a similar big vision.
- Go beyond the current emphasis on off-road trails. Many of the pedestrian projects described in the Framework are off-road trails. While we think that these are positive projects, they are (primarily) recreational, covered in the bicycle portions of the Framework and serve a small proportion of all walking trips. The pedestrian program for the Commonwealth should focus on pedestrian connections that are the core of a transportation network.
- Build suburban sidewalks to schools. Walking to school in most suburbs is dangerous or impossible because there are no sidewalks. Safe Routes to Schools programs can only be successful where there are safe walkways for children. Cars ferrying children to school contribute 20 - 25% of traffic during the morning peak hour. Driving could be reduced through effective promotion of and facilities for walking (and cycling) to school. The construction of sidewalks (or trails) to encourage walking to schools must be given funding priority in the state transportation plan.
- Build sidewalks for roadside shopping areas. Sidewalks should be provided along all routes to commercial shopping facilities. Funding should be provided for upgrades on both state routes and municipal facilities.
- Improve plans for pedestrian access to transit. Pedestrian access plans and funding for implementation should be a component of all rail, bus and rapid transit projects, whether

they are new starts or upgrades of existing facilities. The state must make specific funding commitments to improve pedestrian access to transit.

- Support Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). We would like to see the state's TOD program expanded to include existing concentrations of transit-oriented development (e.g. the MBTA's Braintree and Alewife Stations), where new development may or may not be planned.
- Supplement or expand Chapter 90 funding. A special program for municipal pedestrian facilities must be established to supplement or build upon the Chapter 90 program to allow communities to meet pedestrian needs without reducing funding for vehicle traffic improvements. Sources might include PWED, other state funding sources or federal funds.
- Support enhancement (and other) funding for pedestrians as well as bicycles. Create a separate and equivalent program for pedestrians which parallels the possibility of an enhancement-funded statewide bicycle programs. (*page 131*). Funding sources such as CMAQ, Hazard Elimination and PWED should be reviewed for application to this program.

Program Needs

- Create a pedestrian program in the Framework. The Framework details a bicycle transportation program (*pages 127-8*) but no similar pedestrian program. The needs of pedestrians are often quite different from those of bicyclists and the Framework must provide for both.
- Implement an effective, statewide Safe Routes to Schools program. We note with pleasure that the toolkit on Safe Routes to Schools that WalkBoston developed for MassHighway (MHD) is mentioned as a resource for communities throughout the Commonwealth. The SRS funding included in the recently passed federal transportation bill (SAFETEA-LU) provides the basis for an effective statewide program and we look forward to working with EOT and other state agencies to increase the number of Massachusetts children walking and biking to school. Such a program will require a close coordination among a number of state agencies and programs.
- Provide education for both pedestrians and drivers on pedestrian safety on traveled streets and highways. There is too little emphasis on the safety needs and rights of pedestrians who share streets with motor vehicles (where there are no sidewalks) or who use crosswalks on these roadways. Highway signs should alert drivers to the issue of pedestrian safety. Training for new drivers must include attention to pedestrian rights and safety, through the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) training guides. Safety training for pedestrians should also be considered.
- Develop effective new programs to get more people walking, and team with non-EOT organizations to do so. Massachusetts' residents need to walk even more, and the state should support and provide programs to encourage walking. EOT should collaborate with other state agencies (DPH, Elder Affairs, DOE), with municipalities and with local departments of public health, community health centers and transportation management associations.

Pedestrian Planning Activities

- Set policy for the State Pedestrian Plan. Massachusetts' existing Pedestrian Plan is due for revision. Such revision should incorporate the strategies outlined in this letter. Agency

appointments to the new Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Board should be finalized, and the Board should begin meeting to play a key role in the revision of the Plan.

- Define basic information needs. Data collection on pedestrian travel demand and pedestrian safety, comparable to the information used to plan roadway or transit infrastructure, must become part of the state's on-going planning efforts. Consideration should be given to sharing such information in Massachusetts via a website that includes data, achievements, ongoing and future projects, pertinent laws and regulations, and other useful information.
- Expand and upgrade pedestrian data sources. Much pedestrian data is already collected as part of development and transportation projects. It should be aggregated for general use. Pedestrian crash data and specific locations are not clearly recorded by many municipal policy departments. They should be trained and encouraged to collect it. Regional planning agencies should help municipalities accumulate data. The state GIS data system should be used to portray existing pedestrian paths and desire lines, locations of unsafe pedestrian crossings, and potential rights-of-way for future sidewalks, trails and walkways. To do this the state will need to encourage intensified use of GIS on both the statewide and municipal levels.
- Support regional and municipal planning. Funding assistance should be provided for regions to plan a complete network of pedestrian facilities for multi-municipality trail networks and access to schools and major shopping areas. Local communities should be encouraged and assisted in planning for not only recreational trails but also for sidewalks leading to shopping, workplaces, transit and schools.
- Include pedestrian review in state environmental review and permitting processes. Existing and proposed pedestrian facilities, including connections to transit, schools and commercial areas must be identified and discussed in ENFs, EIRs and other state review documents. State transportation agencies should take the lead in working with environmental agencies and other transportation agencies across the state to implement this review.

Conclusion

We recognize that a real financial commitment is needed to implement these recommendations. But, pedestrians already represent the second largest travel mode in Massachusetts. Volumes could be doubled or tripled with the application of sound policies. Investment in walking will be money well spent, contributing to the health of Massachusetts' citizens, communities and transportation systems.

We request that you add our ideas into the Framework. We would be happy to discuss them with you, and we look forward to participating in the outreach process that will be carried out over the coming months.

Very Truly Yours,

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

Secretary Douglas I. Foy (OCD)
Commissioner Luisa M. Paiewonsky (Mass Highway)
General Manager Daniel Grabauskas (MBTA)
Chairman Matthew J. Amorello (MTA)
Chief Executive Officer Craig P. Coy (MassPort)
Executive Director Marc Draisen (MAPC)