

June 19, 2007

John Cogliano, Chairman
Massachusetts Turnpike Authority
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston Massachusetts 02116

Ian Bowles, Secretary
Executive Office of Environment and Energy
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02114

Bernard Cohen, Secretary
Executive Office of Transportation
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3170
Boston Massachusetts 02116

Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02114

Mike Lewis, Project Manager
CA/T
185 Kneeland Street
Boston, MA 02111

Dear Chairman Cogliano, Secretary Bowles, Secretary Cohen, Commissioner Sullivan and Project Manager Lewis:

We write to you with regard to the New Charles River Basin and the park that will exist when the CA/T has completed its construction activities. We are deeply concerned that the citizens of the Commonwealth will be left with a park that does not live up to its promise as a lynchpin of the metropolitan Boston park system. While we believe that the CA/T commitments include the completion of all elements of the Memorandum of Agreement based on the Master Plan for the New Charles River Basin parks, we are mindful of the current fiscal constraints caused in part by unexpected expenditures for soil remediation, land acquisition and other components of the North Point parks.

Therefore, although we believe the completion of all elements of the Charles River Basin Memorandum of Agreement remain obligations of the Commonwealth, we recognize that the Commonwealth is not on track to complete all of them in the immediate future. As a result, we have considered what would be the best interim condition for the park system while remaining elements are designed, funded, and implemented over a longer period.

We believe that parks that are inaccessible are of little use to the public and those who construct them can be criticized for the expenditure of funds for such limited purposes. We also believe that an interconnected park system is of significant and lasting value to the many citizens of the metropolitan area who use great lengths of this linear network. On the other hand, completing the beautiful landscaping of the remaining open spaces is only of value to a small number of people in the immediate neighborhood if they are not accessible along this linear system.

Thus we propose that to deal with the temporary fiscal constraints, the following priority spending plan be adopted within the available 29F contract budget* :

1. Design and construct the north bank and south bank bridges across the rail tracks and thus create the infrastructure for a continuous park system that runs from Waltham to Quincy.
2. Fix the crossing of the Charles River Dam to make it accessible to persons using wheel chairs, bicycles and the like.
3. Complete the minimum landscaping necessary to make the remaining 29F open space parcels safe and reasonably accessible but do not expend the funds to construct the full landscape designs for these parks.
4. Construct the minimum maintenance facility required to allow the DCR to carry out its maintenance activities (and leave adequate space for future additions to this facility as required.)
5. Put in place a mechanism to work with future developers and public agencies to fund the completion of the landscape plans for the remaining park parcels.
6. Set a six-month timeframe for developing a plan to study, fund and construct other elements of the Memorandum of Agreement (e.g. the historic dam structures, upstream swing bridge).

We believe that this approach to the new Charles River Basin parks will yield the best short-term results for the public and create a fully functional park system. We hope that you will consider our suggestion immediately and prior to any action on the impending 29F bid opening.

We look forward to discussing this proposal with you. Please feel free to contact Wendy Landman (WalkBoston, 617-367-9255) if you have any questions.

Signed,

Central Artery/Tunnel Environmental Oversight Committee, Rob Tuchmann
Charles River Conservancy, Renata von Tscharnier
Charles River Watershed Association, Bob Zimmerman
Charlestown Waterfront Coalition, Ivey St. John
Conservation Law Foundation, Carrie Russell
Downtown North Association, Bob O'Brien
Esplanade Association, Patrice Todisco
LivableStreets, Jeff Rosenblum
MassBike, David Watson
WalkBoston, Wendy Landman
West End Council, Jane Forestall
John DeVillars

* Note - This letter does not pertain to decisions, funding or schedule regarding the Leverett Circle pedestrian bridge, which is funded outside the 29F contract.

Cc Mayor Thomas Menino
Mayor Ken Reeves
Mayor Joseph Curtatone
Congressman Michael Capuano
Senate President Therese Murray
Speaker of the House Sal DiMasi
Senator Jarrett Barrios
Representative Anthony Petrucelli
Representative Marty Walz
Representative Tim Toomey
Representative Eugene O'Flaherty
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Karl Haglund, DCR
Joel Bard, Chairman, New Charles River Basin CAC

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Don MacGillis, Boston Globe
Tom Palmer, Boston Globe
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