



WalkBoston

June 13, 2006

Secretary Stephen R. Pritchard
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Attn.: MEPA Office, Deirdre Buckley
100 Cambridge St.
Boston, MA 02114

Re: EOE #13777
Storrow Drive Tunnel Project

Dear Secretary Pritchard:

WalkBoston appreciates the opportunity to comment on this project during the early phases of project design, and also appreciates the time and in-depth information and conversation that the Department of Conservation and Recreation has provided at the multiple public meetings over the last few months. WalkBoston is also pleased that the redevelopment of the Storrow Drive Tunnel will bring more pedestrian accessibility to the Esplanade.

Our central comment is that we believe this is a critical moment in the history of DCR, the Commonwealth and the City of Boston to reflect on the role that the banks of the Charles should play in the region's transportation and open space network. The Esplanade was conceived as a grand open space for pedestrians. The opening of Storrow Drive as a major regional parkway greatly diminished pedestrian access to the Esplanade and has had deleterious effects on the environmental quality of the park. With the consideration of a roadway design that would reduce the volume and speed of traffic along the river and allow for the re-establishment of pedestrian connections (Option B4), DCR has opened the door to serious consideration of a significantly improved pedestrian and open space environment. WalkBoston looks forward to participating in DCR's planning process for the project, and having the opportunity to provide detailed comments once the options are further refined, and the transportation and environmental impacts and benefits of each option are described.

Our more specific comments address issues that were not incorporated into the ENF or presented at the meetings. When these issues were brought up at the meetings, DCR staff expressed a willingness to include these items in the next round of planning for the project. We look forward to the inclusion of the following information in the Draft EIR and at project information meetings.

1. Information about traffic, pedestrian and bicycle volumes in the Storrow Drive corridor, with estimates of future volumes based on enhanced bicycle and pedestrian conditions and connections to/from city streets and the Esplanade. Given the very different options that are under consideration, adding pedestrian and bicycle counts to the current vehicular counts is imperative to understanding the transportation and environmental impacts and benefits of the alternatives.

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2. Specific presentation of designs for each option for:
 - Pedestrian connections to/from the city streets and the Esplanade. Explorations should include analysis of the pedestrian benefits that arise when the two-tunnel option is introduced and comparison of these benefits with other highway options.
 - Roadway intersection design modifications to enhance pedestrian safety at the connections between city streets and the Esplanade: improved sight lines for drivers; significantly enhanced crosswalks with substantial pedestrian lighting; timed traffic signals and improved signage.
3. Review and assessment of the vehicle design speed for each piece of the Storrow Drive system that is not limited access roadway, under each of the possible options. Lower design speed will create safer pedestrian accommodation. For the at-grade roadway with traffic signals, design speed will be a crucial element of the roadway's impacts on pedestrian safety and access.
4. Options to improve current pedestrian and roadway lighting options on the river side of the Drive, including lighting to encourage early evening use of the Esplanade. The Esplanade serves as a critical element of the pedestrian and bicycle commuting network, and this function should be enhanced by the project.

We look forward to working with DCR on this very important project and ultimately to significantly enhanced walking conditions in the Storrow Drive corridor, a critical part of the Boston pedestrian network.

Very Truly Yours,

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

Cc Mayor Thomas Menino
Commissioner Stephen Burrington, DCR