



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE GENERAL COURT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133 1053

Secretary Maev Valley Bartlett
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge St., Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

November 18, 2014

Dear Secretary Valley Bartlett,

We are writing in response to the Allston I-90 Viaduct Improvement Project Environmental Notification Form (ENF.) We believe this project will benefit Turnpike users and provide significant improvements to the surrounding neighborhoods and to the region.


The core of the project, the reconstruction of the I-90 viaduct, is necessary. The viaduct is deteriorating and nearing the end of its useful life. The reconfiguration of the viaduct provides the opportunity to straighten the highway, install all electronic tolling and decrease congestion along the mainline of the Turnpike. The reconstruction of the interchange will open up a significant amount of land to development, provide opportunities to improve regional connectivity and encourage mode shift. To maximize project benefits, we recommend further consideration of the following components:

- 1) The conversion of the former Beacon Park Yards (BPY) site into an MBTA commuter rail layover facility and the proposed MBTA West Station should be reviewed as part of the draft environmental impact report (DEIR.) Noise and vibration impacts and mitigation for the neighborhoods adjacent to the rail yards and station need to be considered. West Station should have robust pedestrian, bike and public transit connection. To encourage mode shift, a location that maximizes connectivity should be selected. Future connections to the north and east may use the Grand Junction Railroad and the BU Bridge and both should be analyzed in the DEIR.
- 2) Improved pedestrian and cyclist connections are a very important component of the project. The highway and BPY have prevented Allston and North Allston from connecting to each other, the river and the region. Multiple new pedestrian and cyclist connections should be evaluated in the DEIR: north-south, across the highway, connecting North Allston to Allston; east-west connecting the Allston to the river; and a multi-use path through the new development area should connect Allston, West Station, North Allston and the river.

- 3) Moving Soldiers Field Road away from the river to reclaim green space is an important outcome for local residents. Exploration of different scenarios that maximize usable green space along the river should be studied in the DEIR. The expansion of parkland along the river is also needed to facilitate connections from the neighborhood to the river. Getting bikes and pedestrians across Soldiers Field Road will require more land area on the river side to accommodate the footprint of any new pedestrian bridge. The DEIR study area should include the Charles River to assess the water quality impacts of the project.

It is our hope that the net environmental impacts of this project are positive and that many of the potential benefits of this project are realized.


Sincerely,


Senator William N. Brownsberger
Second Suffolk and Middlesex


Representative Marjorie C. Decker
25th Middlesex



Representative Jay Livingstone
8th Suffolk


Representative Frank I. Smizik
15th Norfolk


Senator Sal N. DiDomenico
Middlesex and Suffolk


Representative Kevin G. Honan
17th Suffolk


Representative Michael J. Moran
18th Suffolk


Councilor Mark Ciommo
Boston City Council, District 9