

Linear Park Redesign - Advanced Design Meeting - Q and A Report

The Q and A report was slightly edited to create a better experience for screen readers

Meeting Date: Thursday June 8th, 2023, 5:30pm

Question	Answer
I noticed last week that many of the trees next to the path had been numbered. Was that part of this project? If so, what was the purpose? I'm curious.	That was for an air spading investigation of existing tree roots. We'll talk about that a bit later tonight.
Starting on time is the best way to get people to start on time.	Comment noted.
How many attendees, at this point?	We have 45 non panelist attendees now.
Could you open up the zoom so we can see who we are?	live answered
Do you think Linear Park is a park or a transit corridor?	It's both. The tunnel underneath is transit corridor and the surface is a park with multi-use path.
Where is pedestrian safety in this design?	Safety of all users is always a top priority in all projects.
If it's a park, then why is this process being run by transportation people instead of park people?	The project is managed by a multi-disciplinary team.
Also, if bikes are expected to use the pavement, and walkers the non-paved sections, where does that leave strollers, wheelchairs and motorized chairs, tricycles, roller bladers, etc.?	All users can use the paved path.
Where mature trees do not allow the full width, would it be possible to split the path to circumvent the trees?	We are choosing to narrow the path where trees exist. There really isn't enough space to create separate paths.
How is it seen as useful or beneficial to widen the path? For whom is that seen as beneficial? In what way? Since it won't be wide enough to accommodate pedestrian separation, why do it?	Having a slightly wider path in areas helps to give all users extra space and avoid conflicts.
Sounds terrible in some ways.	Comment noted.
Thank you for incorporating side paths. I use those to walk dogs and keep them out of the path of other path users.	Good to know. Thanks.
"Fun moments," when getting run over by racing bicyclists?? What are you planning to do to slow down speeding bicyclists?? Anything at all??	Comment noted.
If safety is a top priority, what is being done to keep speedy users, including (silent) motorized bicycles and scooters off the path? And how to keep speeds down in general on the path?	We will be developing signage so that people bicycling know that pedestrians have the right of way and that they need to ride carefully.
Pedestrians don't make "turning movements." This is nonsense.	Comment noted.

Are storm rain gardens incorporated in the design?	We will encourage water to run over planted areas before it reaches a drain, but we don't currently have plans for rain gardens. We're not ruling them out however if it makes sense in some areas. There are some concerns with tree impacts associated with digging shallow basins for rain gardens.
Great idea for the spur path!	Comment noted.
Section 1: In addition to the white lines have you considered a few speed bumps to slow down the bikes?	Rumble strips that have been used on paths in the past usually become maintenance issues and are eventually removed. They also do little to slow people down.
You haven't addressed the issue of newer motorized bikes and scooters, which go extremely fast and make almost no sound. I believe they should be banned from this park.	Thanks for the suggestion. This larger issue of not hearing faster users approach can't be addressed in individual projects, but needs larger solutions on the city and state level.
Outside of reducing soil compaction, what are you doing to increase permeability in the park?	Decompacting soils will be the primary way to improve permeability, but we are open to additional suggestions.
Regarding stone dust, your description sounds completely at odds with what we were told over and over with respect to Lechmere Canal Park.	Our objections to stone dust at that location was due to the adjacent trench drain which would cause a significant maintenance issue with sediment clogging the drain.
In regards to the stone markers, could one side note the history of the Linear Park's history as a railroad line.	Thanks for the suggestion. We'll look into that or other ways to mention the history.
We were told a lot more than that about stone dust.	There may have been other issues, but my understanding is that the trench drain was the primary concern. For this project we think it's a great fit for the side paths.
What are the water/irrigation plans for the new plants ?	Irrigation will be provided at entrance areas, and water connection points will be provided at regular intervals along the corridor. During plant establishment the contractor will be responsible for all watering not covered by the new irrigation system.
Are there plans to incorporate restrooms along the path?	There are not plans for adding restrooms.
Perhaps you will get to this but what is the budget for this redesign and how much is being paid for by the State or Fed funds requiring Cambridge to follow the multi use path requirements of those providing the funding?	Based on preliminary estimates, we anticipate the construction budget to be between \$5.5-7 million and city bond funds will be used for the construction.

Missed opportunity to add a Southern connection at Westly Street. Was that not considered?	This was just addressed in the presentation.
We got a full-court press on why we could not under any circumstances have stone dust. I don't even remember anything about blocking the trench drain, but I sure do remember how extremely hostile the city personnel we dealt with from various departments were to stone dust.	Sorry to hear that. Again, no issues with it on this project.
There are several wildlife sign on the Fresh Pond Kingsley Park Hill. Could similar wildlife signs for both mammals and birds be included along Linear Park?	I'm not familiar with those signs but we can look into what they are and if they are appropriate here.
Please comment on the findings from the recent air spading of at risk trees.	This was just addressed in the presentation.
How many bikers use this path now? My experience with the path from Mass Ave to Davis Square is that it is more pedestrian use. I like that the name will be kept and not called a "bike" path but am concerned about the increased volume of bikers, particularly commuters traveling fast. In conjunction with the \$50m redo of Mass Ave for bikers. Is this overkill?	There are many people biking, walking and rolling here and we don't anticipate that this mix will really change based on this project, or others in the area.
Seating attracts people well into the night- echo of gathering at night is very loud - already for us living here when people loiter at night we hear EVERYTHING and it goes all night.	Thanks. We will look at ways to communicate this concern to folks.
Do you have plans to retain the dirt at the end of Westley Ave? Right now, the path is at a higher elevation and quite a bit of dirt spills into the street and can end up in the sewer system. The street sweepers usually can't/don't make it to the ends of the street to remove this dirt.	We will look into this issue.
At night echoes of conversations between buildings are loud.	Comment noted.
What provision is being made to deal with future drought?	Several things: soil decompaction, soil amendments, a new irrigation system, and regularly spaced water access points along the length of the corridor.
Are you replacing the cherry trees?	Yes, we would like to replace with new cherry trees.
Agree with James, open the zoom so we see participants.	Comment noted.
This seems hopeless. If you would like to attend a community meeting about all of this please call me - James Williamson - at 617 820-1363. Leave message, if necessary. Or email: tompaine@hotmail.com Thanks!	
People first!	Comment noted.
If accidents or near-misses occur, how and where can they be reported? It is important to document safety problems that continue to occur in this highly-used park.	Crashes should be reported to the police.

What type of trees will replace the trees that will be removed? LOTS of people used to take pictures under the blooming cherry trees and the "pink snow" of the petals was very beautiful. It'd be great if this could be recreated somewhere along the park, ideally where the cherry trees already are.	We intend to replace them with cherry trees.
Will new trees be planted where the 5 trees are removed near Cedar due to deteriorated condition?	Yes, absolutely.
What are you planning to do to make sure that abutting landowners do not cut down park trees or do work on their land that will have a negative impact on the park trees?	Clearly demarcating the limits of the public park so there is no confusion about which trees are on public vs private property.
How much of the fencing along the park will be replaced?	Parts of the fencing will be replaced with the goal of getting a more consistent fence type and height. We are working with property owners on fences.
Will this be online? With Q&A please??	A recording will be posted. We can look into whether we can capture the Q&A as well.
Is the Miyawaki forest included in the addition of trees or is that separate?	That is in addition to the 120-150 trees we discussed.
With all the additional plantings, play areas and sitting, will the hours change? What about safety concerns? Any policing?	No changes are proposed to the hours. For safety concerns we will keep open site lines to keep all areas highly visible. We will also include emergency call boxes.
Do you have a more detailed plan to show us of the changes at intersection of Linear Path & Tyler Ct?	At this point detailed plans are still in process but we are happy to share them later so stay tuned!
Please share examples of Dan Borelli and Matthew Mazzotta's artwork!	Will do! The work is in process and we haven't seen the specifics yet.
So if you intend seating on that triangle, make it removable since benches have been placed and removed in the past due to smoking drinking, drug use, trash left, loud, intrusive.	Ok, thanks.
I am questioning the need to widen to 14' plus the additional stonedust "no obstruction" zones. The path does not connect to 14' at it's "ends". I'm concerned that such a wide path in a narrow ROW will change the feel of the park. I think the secondary paths for pedestrians will help with path crowding.	We anticipate that with the path widened in places, conflicts will be reduced. While doing this, we are aware of the concern to maintain or enhance the character of the path.
Has any thought been given to restrictions on electric bikes, scooters, and other vehicles that can go faster than a given speed? The path is becoming dangerous for pedestrians.	These issues are things that need wider discussion on the city and state level.
Our path is a through way, a passageway.	Comment noted.
I walk the path every day.	Comment noted.

Given the rising temps and eminent impact of climate change, what plans do you have for watering the new trees? Delighted to see new trees, however, they need great care as they may be too small to survive on their own.	We will treat them similarly to new street trees. the contractor will be responsible for watering for the first 3 years, and we will have water access points at regular intervals along the corridor for future maintenance needs.
Not pursuing the Westley Ave connection is a huge mistake. Repeating the neighbors' "safety" concerns is just shameful! Remember that this meeting is being recorded.	Thank you for your comment.
Please include the Q&A.	Comment noted.
Have you thought about posting a speed limit for bikers, motorized bike users of perhaps 12 MPH?	We will try to encourage people to move at reasonable speeds and look at ways to do that.
Motorized vehicles on the path are increasingly common. Is this okay? If not, are there plans to address this issue?	Comment noted.
The Q&A is rich in useful comments and relevant insights! Not hard to do!	Thanks for your comment. We will take that under advisement!
I would love to have a picnic table in the triangle that my whole family could sit at.	Thanks for your comment. We will take that under advisement!
During the presentation on Section 4, you mentioned Retail Access and Blue Bikes however neither were described in the presentation. Can you speak to this, please as I see neither of these as appropriate for this area designated as a natural park.	These were mentioned since the path comes near retail already, and that there is an existing Blue Bikes station in the Camp Cameron triangle.
The lights we have now are beautiful - at night travelling through the park they are not too bright, just beautiful, winter evenings with snow the lighting again is lovely, I struggle to understand why you would replace instead of simple maintenance.	We will look at the light levels and try to match them. Light fixtures need replacing after a certain amount of time and these lights are showing signs of needing replacement.
It is inconsiderate for some to support putting a new opening (Westley Avenue) to the Park next to people's homes with all the problems and consequences it would cause, just to add a little convenience for those who do not live there.	Thank you for your comment.
It would be good to have a continuation of signage as seen on minuteman bike trail - bikes give way to pedestrians - pass when safe. Some bikes just don't care no matter how wide you make the paths, they will still cut too close.	Thank you for your comment.
As is, this is an exceptionally magical path. You really feel as though you're somewhere else and far away, in a forest in the middle of the City. Please be sensitive to this. Concerned about it becoming a bike expressway. The idea of having the faster bikes elsewhere makes excellent sense! Keep it intimate and wondrous.	Thank you for your comment.

The safety concerns for Westley Ave are real—and based on the history of when there was an opening. The design team should be commended for listening to the unanimity of the Westly Ave residents. Tim Garvey	Thank you for your comment.
I agree with moving faster vehicles to streets and to IQHQ. Better to divert than risk everyone's safety.	Thank you for your comment.
Yes, please look at current light levels- for those of us next door, not intrusive, but just the right amount for travelling on the path at night which is MAGICAL.	Comment noted.
Could you expand on the Tyler Ct, "section 5" area? What kind of fencing do you have in mind? Will the art work and play area/benches abut the existing fence on Westley Ave?	We are looking at fencing types similar to what is used in certain areas of the path, like along the Linea housing. I am not aware of artwork near the fence at Westley Ave.
Less is more!	Thank you for your comment.
Thanks - if not speed bumps, perhaps rough materials in strips across the path at narrow areas and blind corners to give bikers a heads-up?	Thank you for your comment, we will consider that!
Agree with "less is more" - well said.	Thank you for your comment.
Not including access to the path from Westley Avenue seems inconsistent with the goal to "strengthen neighborhood connection." I understand residents don't want strangers walking down their street, but that concern is based on events from more than a quarter century ago. Access from residential streets is common along the north side of Linear Path and along the Somerville Community Path, Minuteman Trail, and Alewife Greenway. As a compromise, could the City install a gate in the existing fence which could have a lock that would activate automatically between, say, 10pm and 6am?	This is a difficult issue and we understand both sides. Based on feedback we had during conceptual design, this is the design direction.
If an agreeable way is found to divert quick moving traffic as was suggested by Lew Weitzman, would it be possible to keep the widening the path to 12 feet?? Broadening the path may not make it safer for all users. I do love the introduction of many elements of this project.	The side paths will give people an opportunity to walk off to the side if they like. Its not intended to divert people. Given the number of users here, a somewhat wider path will help reduce conflicts.
Huzzah to Nicole's love of cherry trees. I so agree.	Comment noted.
Please respond to the comment about slowing down bicyclists, possibly with "friction." Or if not, how else? And what is your "logic" or evidence for slight widening helping make it safer or more comfortable for pedestrians??	[live answered]
Is the stone dust path held together with a plastic polymer or another natural product? Polymer is plastic... the city of Cambridge should be on track to reduce plastics.... especially in ground usage?	It's an organic binding product - no plastic polymers will be used.
How does that slow down bikes??	[live answered]

You seem to be enabling the speeders to go fast or faster!	Comment noted.
Has the width of the adjoining portions of the minuteman path in other towns been documented?	I don't believe we have, but i don't think that would impact our opinion on path width.
Would you be able to stake the path widening so impacts can be more easily visualized?	We have done air spading of roots nearby the path to reduce any impacts. We don't anticipate staking the path.
Opening sight lines at the "conflict corner" will make a huge difference. Striping the pavement doesn't mean you can see around blind corners.	Comment noted.
When will the report from the air spading effort be shared with the public?	We would be happy to share it as soon as it is complete. We anticipate that will be very soon.
Just reiterating the goal of being ambitious with side paths which I think will help a lot with congestion. Hoping they can be continuous on the full length of the path. Thanks!	Yes, the goal is to add them where we have the space to do so.
My question regarding motorized vehicles slipped through the cracks. My impression when I walk along the path is that the greatest risks to pedestrians are not from cyclists, but from mopeds, e-bikes and other electric vehicles. Is there a policy for motorized vehicles on the path?	E-bikes are allowed under state law. I believe that speed limits or bans would require additional policy or legislation.
In response to Chris Cassa's concerns about being unwelcoming to bicyclists, I would say that there are bicyclists who are in the park to enjoy the space and there are bicyclists who are there to get from one place to another as quickly as possible. The people who are using this primarily for rapid transit from here to there might be better accommodated by being given the option to use other paths, as was suggested. I hope the park can be optimized for people there to enjoy a beautiful place with others who may be using various modes of travel.	Thank you for your comment.
I think that Deneen's suggestion for staking the proposed widened path edges will be very helpful for the design team and the public.	Thank you for your comment.
Great idea, Deneen. As you know well, at Magazine Beach Park, this was critical. You only knew that something was wonderful or horrible until it was staked off. We were able to improve the design prior to build by doing this.	Thank you for your comment.
On the minuteman trail there are some speeding bikes that just don't care - they cut too close to children, strollers, other bikes (me)....	Comment noted.
Yes, want more natural space not urban park - nothing trumps the beauty of nature.	Thank you for your comment.
I share James's concern for too many amenities in the park.	Thank you for your comment.
Thank you for this!	Thank you for attending!

There are two neighborhood one-way streets that run parallel to the park, rather than diversions to unsafe roadways, I think these should be considered as alternates.	Thank you for your comment.
No need for too many amenities.	Thank you for your comment.
Many thanks to Charlie Creagh and to Kevin Beuttell for this presentation. I appreciate that Kevin provided a way the City can proactively deal with watering the trees!	Thank you!