

City of Cambridge

Executive Department

LOUIS A. DePASQUALE
City Manager

LISA C. PETERSON
Deputy City Manager

October 28, 2020

Stephanie Pollack
Secretary and Chief Executive Officer
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116-3969

Dear Secretary Pollack,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the current status of the Allston I-90 project and provide Cambridge's view of current options for the "Throat" section of the project. Cambridge continues to have great interest in this project given its scale and importance for both regional and local mobility as well as its impacts on the Charles River and adjacent neighborhoods in Cambridge and Boston.

I appreciate MassDOT's efforts in recent months to work with the City of Boston and advocates to expand the range of options for the Throat to include a Modified At-grade Alternative that better meets the project's goals and the project's intended Purpose and Need as laid out in prior permitting actions. In contrast to the most recent Highway Viaduct Alternative, the Modified At-grade, in the view of the City of Cambridge, is preferred since it meets many more project and community goals.

As always, Cambridge is also focused on the larger project context as well as specific design alternatives. Cambridge continues to value the following as core project elements that should be considered in reviewing the Modified At-grade grade option:

- Priority and expansion of sustainable transportation including bus and rail passenger service and pedestrian and bicycle circulation.
- Providing additional parkland as a space for people, watershed ecosystem, shade trees and climate resilience measures.
- Noise mitigation of both existing and future transportation noise, including during construction, as well as buffering facilities with landscaping to reduce visual impacts and provide environmental benefits.

Sustainable Transportation

In order for the region to continue to grow and to meet our goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, transit, walking and biking infrastructure must be given the highest priority. The Modified At-grade Option includes reconstructing the little Grand Junction Bridge over Soldiers Field Road which is essential to connecting the Grand Junction multi-use path, currently in design, to the Charles River path network and to enabling a future two-track transit connection between West Station



and North Station, as laid out in RailVision. Both are top priorities for Cambridge. It also includes more feasible and attractive connections to Commonwealth Avenue/Boston University and the Allston neighborhood.

Parkland

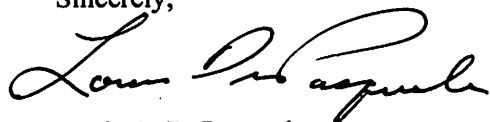
While space does not exist to create significant parkland in the Throat for any option, the Modified At-grade Alternative includes a long-sought goal of a restored, living shoreline which will help improve water quality and support native trees and shrubs. A widened Paul Dudley White Path in this alternative is a very positive addition to help people enjoy the river and enhanced shoreline.

Mitigation of Current and Future Noise and Transportation Impacts

Noise mitigation of existing and future transportation noise is a priority for Cambridge and most important in the Throat since the river sheet easily conveys all noise from the Turnpike, Soldiers Field Road and the railroad across to Cambridgeport, and Magazine Beach, the second largest open space in Cambridge. Both the existing viaduct and Modified Highway Viaduct require trucks and other vehicles to climb and descend the viaduct which creates substantial noise, in addition to being elevated so noise carries further. The Modified At-grade, by staying level, immediately reduces overall noise and how far it travels. Cambridge is committed to seeing that any chosen alternative mitigates noise to levels below current levels and does not contribute to additional noise pollution in such a dense urban environment. The Modified At-grade has the additional benefit that since no facilities are on structures, at some point in the future when transportation patterns or environmental changes occur, lane reductions on roadways could be more easily be achieved, creating space for other needs.

Thank you for your consideration of the City of Cambridge's comments on the Modified At-grade Alternative. We look forward to working with Federal Highway and MassDOT during this permitting process. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Bill Deignan in the Community Development Department at wdeignan@cambridgema.gov, or at 617-349-4632.

Sincerely,



Louis A. DePasquale
City Manager

Cc: Susanne Rasmussen, Director of Environmental & Transportation Planning