

Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossing of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Tracks

Public Meeting #2 - Thursday, September 14, 2023 - 5:30pm on Zoom

Q and A Report | Some questions and comments have been edited to create a better experience for screen reading programs

Note: Many chat questions were answered verbally during the meeting. A link to the video recording is available on the project website.

Name	Question or Comment	Answer
Jerry Koenig	Hello, My name is Jerry Koenig & I live at the Brickworks. I propose all future meetings be held in an auditorium of a school or government building	Thanks.
Anonymous Attendee	Will you be recording?	Yes, the meeting is recorded.
Sabina Duborg	Will we be able to provide verbal feedback on this call please?	Yes, we will take questions verbally and in writing.
Sabina Duborg	Not just through chat. Thank you.	Yes, we will take questions verbally and in writing.
Sabina Duborg	Thank you.	Noted.
Michael Storek	I agree.	Noted.
Anonymous Attendee	Will the recording be made public?	Yes.
James Williamson	How many attendees?	56 attendees.
Eric Grunebaum	If you know, I'm curious how far back the effort to create a bridge or tunnel here dates? I recall Rep. Decker talking about it around 20 years ago when she was a Councillor... and maybe Rep. Wolf as well. Thx!	I don't know exactly how long its been discussed but its been a long time.
James Williamson	Where are images?	n/a.
James Williamson	Where is the box culvert? on images?	It will be shown on a graphic coming soon.
James Williamson	Wouldn't Yerxa be closer to a good model?	Yerxa is a great model but it has much more space than we have here.
Eric Grunebaum	Thanks Bill! If you're able to pull out an approximate date, I'd be appreciative! (A long time, as in ~20 years?)	Sorry but I cannot give a date.
James Williamson	Parcel B?	Parcel B is a narrow maybe 14' wide parcel given to the city by the developers of Brickworks. The parcel is behind Jefferson Park.
Anonymous Attendee	Where are those arrows?	Not sure what you are referring to.
Sandra Durmaskin	Where are these relative to the properties? Where is parcel B exactly?	Answered verbally.
James Williamson	Why are they claiming it is "unavailable"?	I cannot speak for the MBTA but they like to keep as wide a right of way as possible, especially where this is higher speed passenger service.
Sandra Durmaskin	It seems like the storm drain is the constraint, but why can you not start the tunnel to one or the other sides of the storm drain in order to have a straight visible tunnel?	The storm drain runs along the rail tracks beyond Alewife Brook Parkway and into N. Cambridge in the other direction. It blocks creating a straight, visible tunnel.
Anonymous Attendee	I don't understand why we're trying to build a pathway. If you go half a block or so either way, there's a perfectly good bridge and Sherman street itself that will get you to the same place. There's also the dog park and parkway / green areas towards Alewife reservation, so it's not like folks in this area don't have easy access to such spaces.	Thanks for your comment.
Lisa Camacho	I am so happy the crossing will be a bridge, not a tunnel.	Thanks for your comment.
Eric Grunebaum	Will the crossing connect into the Fresh Pond Mall parking lot?	People will be able to get to the Fresh Pond Mall via the new Danehy/New Street path. It will not land in the Mall parking lot.
Sabina Duborg	I would like to speak and provide feedback. Please. Thanks.	Noted.
Anonymous Attendee	Why are you not considering building the pathway through the cemetery? (OR along the Fresh Pond Apartments parking lot - seems like plenty more space there to do so without disturbing Jefferson Park or Brickworks residents.)	I am not sure what this would look like. The city does not control this area so we don't know if a connection is possible.
Sandra Durmaskin	Will there be only one start point on the Rindge side? Or can there be more than 1? Where is the contemplated start location?	We would like to have more than one walkway if we can.
Doug Brown	There's no Raise Hand button visible!	Let me know if you'd like to speak.
Lilli Smith	Proposed precedent: North Bank Pedestrian Bridge (under the Zakim bridge).	Thanks.

Gerry Byrne	Love the bridge option – regarding proposed multi-use path between 362 Rindge parking lot and the Brickworks...can you elaborate a little about that?	Sorry but I cannot give details.
Anonymous Attendee	I grew up in this area my entire life, in the towers & Brickworks. I'm very excited about the ability to bring our community closer to other folks in the neighborhood. I fear some criticism is rooted in NIMBYism. I actually think the property is well lit so I don't understand that comment.	Thanks.
Hui Xiao	Agree. Jefferson Park is better solution.	Thanks.
Michael Storek	Great point, Sabina - fully agree!	Thanks.
Kevin Moses	Would it be feasible, regardless of the route the bridge takes, to have it take more gradual, sweeping turns rather than 90 degree angles? These are difficult to navigate on bikes, especially cargo bikes.	Yes, these drawings are just "cartoon" drawings, not designs. More gradual turns can be looked at.
Eric Grunebaum	Thanks Bill — could you show that with the cursor on one of the maps so we can all visualize it? That's a very important connection to make for the Rindge communities.	Sorry but I am not sure what you are referring to.
Maei Gashaw	Is there a way for the pathway to be built so its accessible to folks in the towers, so a path in the back so folks can get through in the parking lot in 342 Rindge Avenue & Jefferson Park.	We will look at this further once we go into a design process.
Hui Xiao	Jefferson Park is more realistic solution, save time and effort/cost.	Thanks.
Sandra Durmaskin	So based on image on screen now, where would the start points begin please?	Sorry but don't know which image you are referring to.
Gerry Byrne	I love the idea of a crossing and think that a new proposed multi-use path between 362 Rindge parking lot and the Brickworks (water easement?) makes a ton of sense. Gamble Associates 2021 Technical Report page 44 and page 48 – options one or two, for the reason cited, namely: Clear. Straight connection and continuation from the pedestrian crossing from Russell fields. Complementary. Natural pathway with little or no impact as it uses a strip of grass that is not used. Lighting. There is pretty good existing lighting along that strip. Community Safety. Wide enough for comfortable bidirectional foot and pedal traffic to use.	Thanks.
Lilli Smith	(Correction: North Bank Pedestrian Bridge (under the Zakim Bridge). Also, I am so excited about this project. As a Clifton Street resident, parent, and every day Danehy park users it will be so great to have better Danehy Park access. Thanks for all the work and clear presentation. Totally understand why the underpass doesn't work but am excited that the bridge does!	Thanks.
Eric Grunebaum	Thanks for the shoutout James! That said, it's not my plan — there are ~650 followers of "Restore Jerry's Pond" on Facebook, ~450 in our email group. And we have a leadership team of 9, including two folks who live in affordable home ownership units across the street from the "pit that wants to be a pond"!	Thanks.
Sandra Durmaskin	Can you please commit to 100% ADA accessibility? As you know, the Alewife bridge is not, and it would be unbelievable to make a second bridge that is not accessible.	Yes, it will be accessible. Thanks.
Anonymous Attendee	If you wanted privacy, don't live in a city.	Noted.
Eric Grunebaum	In case anyone would like to follow: www.facebook.com/jerryspond	Noted.
Anonymous Attendee	"Long understood" from where / what source? How is the city going to take responsibility for possible loitering, trash / littering, security, maintenance and upkeep, the like?	I think the city can talk to Brickworks further about issues there.
Doug Brown	There appears to be no western approach ramp on the north side of the tracks. This seems ridiculous, as the bulk of bridge users will be coming from west of the bridge (Cambridge Park Drive, Alewife Station, Rindge Towers). Why was no western approach ramp included?	Once we get into more detailed design, we can see if we can find space so that ramping can turn back in that direction.
Doug Brown	I agree with Gerry regarding a more direct path from Rindge Ave to the tracks.	Thanks.
Maei Gashaw	Have you all even asked to see if you can have that path between 362 Rindge Avenue & Brickworks? That's a much better option.	My understanding is that the CRA is discussing this as part of their study.

Sandra Durmaskin	So is that where the path will be? between 362 & brickworks? Please do you have an image of the proposed placement? This is not clear.	Cambridge Redevelopment Authority is working on paths at 362 Rindge Avenue so we do not have an image of that.
Bomy Chung	I also second Sabina, Julia, and others. I'm concerned for various reasons about building through Brickworks. I also second above questions - aren't Rindge Towers, Jefferson Park, and cemetery all public property? Why can't the city build either through the Ridge Tower parking lot (clearly lots of space) or the cemetery?	The properties you mention are not necessarily "public" in the same way as city property. The cemetery is owned by the Catholic Church, the Towers are owned by various property owners and Jefferson Park is owned by the Cambridge Housing Authority, which is not a city entity.
Anonymous Attendee	Do you have any studies that show how feelings of abutters change over time? Before and during construction of the Greenway, there were many complaints. I live right by the path now, and love it. Great path, great access to other neighborhoods.	There are publicly available studies to show how feelings change over time.
Gerry Byrne	Capacity and volume projections for the multi-use path would be great to discuss further through a transportations study.	It would be hard to estimate the use of any one connection since it depends on where people are coming from and if multiple entry point are available. We do not have plans for a study to look at trying to estimate this.
Sandra Durmaskin	Have you made a site visit? Could you consider that please, not later, but before memorialize plan?	We have made several site visits to the area.
Gerry Byrne	Will the City applying a dominant easement to narrow easements? We should talk about maintenance.	Thanks.
Y. Julia Wang	I second the concern about who would bear the financial burden of maintaining the Brickworks easement.	This is a good question and one we'll look into.
Bomy Chung	I second everything Bonnie just said!	Thanks.
Kavitha Venkatakrisnan	Can we get access to the feasibility studies that were conducted?	We are in the process of finishing the study and will make it available when its done.
James Williamson	Eric: That's why I hastened to be sure to add "with neighbors..."	Noted.
Gerry Byrne	One somewhat related point on the sidewalk on Rindge - we will need to think about those exiting the community without an onslaught of traffic coming in either direction. So we really have safe passing and entry/exit points.	Thanks.
Lilli Smith	Proximity precedent of close windows: All of the paths to Davis Square	Thanks.
James Williamson	When you say you don't have specific information asked about but then present or frame what you do present purportedly representing entities please don't introduce arguments on behalf of positions you admit you don't know about!	Thanks.
Sabina Duborg	Why can't we use the borderline of the cemetery?	I'm not clear what you mean by borderline? The cemetery is not owned by the city.
Bomy Chung	To be clear, the Brickworks road (beyond main entrance) is a One Way road - so it's not even a two-way.	Thanks.
Norman Daoust	Thank you for informative and well organized and well conducted meeting.	Thanks.
Maei Gashaw	Yes it needs to make sure its connected to all the different buildings to the park! Say that louder for the folks in the back!	Thanks.
James Williamson	I've had my hand raised again since I believe I came in originally under your two minutes - loosely managed, which I agree with - "limit."	Noted.
Eric Grunebaum	I looked up the Cambridge Housing Authority board and 3 of the 5 board members are appointed by the City Manager and approved by the Council so doesn't the City have quite a bit of influence there? The website says "the CHA Board oversees the Agency's overall direction."	Thanks.
Bonnie Kwan	I'm also concerned creating a path from Porter Square commuter rail on the brickworks side as opposed to placing it on the shopping center side of the tracks. Can this be reviewed please? And thank you.	Thanks.
Sandra Durmaskin	In the future, please provide a visual plan before a meeting, so folks can study and provide feedback, as opposed to this dense information on the spot, that is still unclear as to your intent, other than that you are pursuing grant funding for a bridge.	Thanks. I believe the presentation was posted on the project website this morning.

Eric Grunebaum	362 Rindge Avenue is Just-A-Start's building and I believe they partner with the City. The cemetery is in disrepair so perhaps the Church would trade some help fixing it and allow access?	Thanks.
Sabina Duborg	Understood. The area of land between the cemetery and Jefferson Park.	This is owned by both entities.
Iida Benschman	Can we see how this Brickworks easement was described in a document?	Yes, we can supply this.
Bonnie Kwan	Is there a glossary of terms for these acronyms please? Thanks	We will try to use fewer acronyms in the future.
Maei Gashaw	There is a community room in Jefferson Park, you can hold a meeting there so residents can come easier.	Noted.
Jeffrey Yu	I live at brickworks and bicycle regularly. I would enjoy a connection to the park, but I share the concerns of my neighbors, and feel that a bike path on the border of 362 Rindge Avenue followed by a westerly facing up ramp to a bridge makes the most sense.	Thanks.
Doug Brown	Regarding the south side of the tracks, it's important that the City not backtrack on its promise to find a way to connect the future New Street path through to Sherman Street, whether it be on MBTA land or on the newly acquired City parcel at Bellis Circle. This would be the first phase of a continuous path on the south side of the park that would run from Belmont to Porter Square and access Mooney Street, Fawcett Street, Wheeler Street, Terminal Road, New Street, and Sherman Street in between.	Thanks.
Lucy Gao	It would be great to illustrate all the contemplated and proposed path options and directionality of the paths (due to one way cul de sac design of Brickworks road) to the proposed bridge connector for future meetings (even the non-public path options such as Jefferson Park and Fresh Pond apartments).	Thanks.
Doug Brown	Such a path south of the tracks is shown in the City's latest Bike Plan and would go a long way towards satisfying the City's obligations under the CSO.	Noted.
Jaime Lindell	Thank you all for a clear presentation. I echo many of my fellow Brickwork neighbors concerns, but not as "NIMBYism" as someone noted in the chat, just want to ensure you are really working to deliver the best solutions versus easiest to accomplish because you have an easement. There are definitely safety, maintenance, privacy and other concerns that need to continue to be discussed across all 3 properties. I welcome the separate discussion with Brickworks Trustees.	Noted.
Bonnie Kwan	I can join the trustees on the site visit please include me. Thanks.	Noted.
Gerry Byrne	Thank you.	Thanks.
Eric Grunebaum	Thanks Charlie, Bill, this will be interesting to see how it unfolds!	Thanks.
Anonymous Attendee	There is a certain amount of entitlement and privilege it sounds like from Brickworks folks around privacy and I really wonder what Jefferson Park residents think.	Noted.
Bonnie Kwan	Can you share slide deck please?	Yes, the slide deck is available on the project website.