

October 30, 2020

Secretary Stephanie Pollack
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Room 4160
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Secretary Pollack:

Re: Select the Modified All At-Grade Option as the Preferred Alternative for the Throat Section of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project

We, the undersigned, urge MassDOT to select the Modified All At-Grade Option as the Preferred Alternative for the Throat section of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project. We oppose the Modified Highway Viaduct, Soldiers Field Road Hybrid, and No Build Options.

Of the alternatives presented, the Modified All At-Grade Option best meets the stated project purpose to address roadway deficiencies and safety concerns, and the stated project need to address the multimodal deficiencies within the broader transportation system—including deficiencies in commuter rail, transit, open space, walking, and biking infrastructure. Additionally, the Modified All At-Grade Option is endorsed by the City of Boston, the host jurisdiction for this project—we support and amplify the City's position, which is captured in the enclosed September 23, 2020, letter. In addition, both the Boston City Council and Cambridge City Council, representing the two cities most directly affected by this project, have endorsed the All At-Grade Option.

Significant work must still be done to refine the project design. The Modified All At-Grade Option has the highest potential to positively shape the region and to protect and enhance the Charles River Basin. It therefore merits the most design focus in the year ahead and should be selected as the Preferred Alternative. Soldiers Field Road can and must be shifted back from the edge of the river.

We appreciate MassDOT's efforts to seek stakeholder input on the Throat section of this project—and we are pleased to speak today with one united voice. We look forward to continuing to work with MassDOT on this and the numerous other key elements that should be part of this vital multimodal transportation, environmental stewardship, and city building project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

350 MA Transportation Working Group
A Better City
Allston Brighton CDC
Allston Civic Association
Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
Boston Cyclists Union
Boston Society of Landscape Architects
Brookline GreenSpace Alliance
Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association
Cambridge Plant & Garden Club Executive Committee
Cambridge Redevelopment Authority
Charles River Conservancy
Conservation Law Foundation
Fresh Pond Residents Alliance
Kendall Square Association
LivableStreets Alliance
Magazine Beach Partners
Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Massachusetts Sierra Club
MassBio
MASSPIRG
Pioneer Institute
Transit Matters
Transportation for Massachusetts
WalkBoston
Worcester Chamber of Commerce
Harry Mattison, Allston resident and I-90 Task Force Member
Jessica Robertson, Allston resident and I-90 Task Force Member
Fred Yaloris, Cambridge resident and I-90 Task Force Member

Attachments:

- City of Boston letter
- Boston City Council resolution
- Cambridge City Council resolution



City of Boston
Mayor Martin J. Walsh
Public Works & Transportation

September 23, 2020

Secretary Stephanie Pollack
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116
Stephanie.Pollack@dot.state.ma.us

Dear Secretary Pollack,

We want to reiterate the City's strong desire that the All-At-Grade option be selected as the preferred design alternative for the Allston Multimodal Project and our opposition to the selection of the Highway Viaduct option. We believe that the All-At-Grade option has the highest potential to leave a lasting positive legacy for Boston and the region, and thus it merits the most design focus over the year ahead.

While the early indications are that each Throat option is roughly equivalent in cost to build, only the All-At-Grade option relieves the toll payers on the Mass Pike and the taxpayers across the State from the very expensive burden of maintaining, repairing and eventually replacing a lengthy viaduct -- a cost we are all bearing today.

While each option proposes the same number of rail lines and travel lanes today, the All-At-Grade option best preserves flexibility to redesign this corridor as the travel needs of our residents -- and the strategies we use to achieve a carbon free Commonwealth -- evolve. From repurposing travel lanes for bus priority to traffic calming on Soldiers Field Road, a number of compelling ideas have been raised about the future of this corridor. A legacy provided by the All-At-Grade would be the choice for future generations to more easily adapt this corridor to their needs.

While each option seeks to address the noise from the thousands of cars and trucks that can be heard across sections of Allston and Cambridge, only the All-At-Grade option eliminates the sound of cars and trucks gearing up to climb an elevated viaduct and takes away the raised platform from which this noise is projected.

Finally, while each option holds the promise of a pedestrian bridge, only the All-At-Grade option takes down the visual barrier that has stood between our residents and the river for

generations, daylighting a section of our city as MassDOT has already done to great acclaim in Forest Hills and along the Greenway -- albeit and necessarily without creating equivalent open space in this case.

The All-At-Grade option is not without its challenges. In particular, while no travel lanes would be in the river, it requires that the space for pedestrians, joggers and cyclists be on a boardwalk in the Charles River, and that the shoreline restoration of the Charles likely takes place where there is river and riprap today. These impacts should not be taken lightly. We believe, however, that the community, financial, and long term environmental and transportation benefits of the All-At-Grade option merit this option being selected as the preferred alternative.

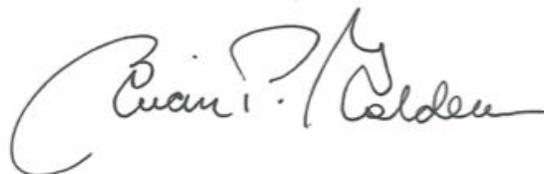
To your great credit, you have taken the time to get this transformative project right and are driving this process to a necessary decision point. The MassDOT team and your independent review team have devoted significant effort to this; and you have welcomed, embraced and enhanced ideas from the public -- best illustrated by the All At Grade option itself.

Knowing that all options of the Throat will be carried forward but that one option -- the preferred alternative -- will get the most design attention, we ask that you select the option for that additional attention that is in the best long term interests of the City and, we believe, the region; we ask that you select the All-At-Grade.

Sincerely,



Chris Osgood
Chief of Streets



Brian Golden
Director
Boston Planning & Development Agency



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

A RESOLUTION REGARDING THE ALLSTON MULTIMODAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

- WHEREAS**, Since 2014, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has been planning the Allston Multimodal Improvement Project, which will transform road, railway, and land use patterns along Interstate 90, and create new planning opportunities; *and*,
- WHEREAS**, The Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation has formally requested the substitutions of the Modified All At-Grade Option in place of the at-grade throat option presented in the Scoping Summary Report.
- WHEREAS**, The Modified All At-Grade Option contains a wider version of the Paul Dudley White Path on a boardwalk, as well as a wider “living shoreline” at the edge of the Charles River.
- WHEREAS**, It is of utmost importance to continue to create a walkable and bikeable neighborhood well-connected with footbridge access to the Charles River with a linear buffer park, cycle track, and new city streets designed for low speed traffic by building a majority of new streets with three or fewer lanes; *and*,
- WHEREAS**, Any design elements should improve the Charles River riverbank and parkland in a manner consistent with the I-90 Riverfront Analysis; *and*,
- WHEREAS**, Building decking above I-90 and all tracks would better knit the neighborhoods together with the consistent goal of achieving true transit-oriented development, and minimizing the noise pollution and air pollution impacts on the abutting residential neighborhoods; *and*,
- WHEREAS**, The public comment period for the Allston Multimodal Improvement Project ends on October 30, 2020.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

That the Boston City Council urges the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to offer due diligence and serious consideration to design elements which prioritize a livable, walkable, and bikeable riverbank and parkland for all, including an all At-Grade “Throat” design.



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