

May 11, 2021

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jake Auchincloss
1524 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515-2104

The Honorable Katherine Clark
2448 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Stephen Lynch
2109 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable William Keating
2351 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James McGovern
Chairman, House Committee on Rules
408 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Seth Moulton
1127 Longworth
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman, House Committee on Ways and
Means
2309 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ayanna Pressley
1108 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lori Trahan
1616 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Build Back Better with the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project in Boston

Dear Members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation:

Thank you for your collective efforts to secure nearly \$30.5 billion in federal relief for our national transit systems via the American Rescue Plan. Investment in public transit will contribute to much-needed economic recovery during and after the pandemic. We seek to work with you to ensure that we build back better and make smart investments in our public transit, highway, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.

We see the promise of the American Jobs Plan, which will modernize 20,000 miles of highways and roads throughout the nation and expand transit and rail into new communities. With your leadership and a new Administration, we are poised to reimagine, modernize, and fortify our nation's transportation infrastructure – and to advance the transformative local projects needed to demonstrate climate leadership, further environmental justice, and create the transportation systems of the future.

One such project is the **Interstate-90 Allston Multimodal Project**, which creates an opportunity to dramatically improve livability and connectivity for residents of Boston, Brookline, and Cambridge, while enhancing regional mobility for Boston's MetroWest communities, creating a

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with the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project

new stop on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's Worcester/Framingham Commuter Rail Line to be known as West Station, and providing future transit from West Station to Kendall Square and beyond to North Station. The I-90 Allston Multimodal Project has the potential to transform the region by providing benefits to drivers, transit riders, bikers, and pedestrians across the region. Moreover, the project complements other work to develop regional rail and expand rail options to western Massachusetts.

Additionally, this section of Boston would benefit from rehabilitation or replacement of the 90-year-old, structurally deficient Grand Junction Bridge over the Charles River, because of the important role it plays for the entire south side passenger rail system, linking to the only currently available commuter rail maintenance facility in Somerville, and because it establishes the basis for eventual two-track passenger service to Kendall Square and North Station and helps to complete the remediation of this part of the Charles River Basin by providing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity of the two banks of the Charles River.

We request your support to secure federal funds in the American Jobs Plan and/or in a future transportation reauthorization bill to make the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project a reality and to ensure that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) advance a project design with highway, rail, parkway, bicycle, and pedestrian paths at ground level.

The current viaduct and Turnpike Extension were constructed prior to enacting the National Environmental Policy Act and were, therefore, permitted to divide the community from natural resources, destroy passenger rail stations, and create environmental burdens. While most highway projects receive more than 90 percent of financing through federal funding, the current viaduct was funded primarily through tolls paid by residents and workers of central and Western Massachusetts. It is particularly important to prioritize new infrastructure funds to remedy this half-century mistake and construct multimodal infrastructure that can serve as a foundation for environmentally sound economic redevelopment of the previous rail yard.

There Is Broad Consensus For an All At-Grade Design.

In 1965, Massachusetts officials opened the Allston section of I-90, shoehorning an eight-lane elevated highway between Boston University and the Charles River, dividing a vibrant working-class community and wounding vital riverfront habitat in the process. Some 60 years later, the Cities of Boston and Cambridge and the Town of Brookline still endure impacts from this obsolete, failed transportation policy that placed a highway above the needs of neighborhoods and the environment.

Fortunately, this outdated viaduct is nearing the end of its useful lifespan and needs to be replaced, allowing the Commonwealth to construct a future where the needs of public transit riders, cyclists, pedestrians, and the health of the river are as important as motorists traveling on this section of highway. As part of this project, the Commonwealth must decide how to carry I-90 through the narrow strip of land between Boston University and the Charles River referred to as "the throat" — either on an elevated viaduct or at ground level.

A broad and diverse coalition of regional stakeholders have joined in support of rebuilding I-90

Joint Federal Delegation Letter Build Back Better with the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project

at ground level (All At-Grade) for the throat section of the project. This design would tear down the existing highway viaduct, place the highway at ground level, establish new ecosystems – such as constructed wetlands that can reduce erosion, protect water quality, and increase flood storage capacity – and create new paths that separate and enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and provides sweeping views of the Charles River. Additionally, replacing the viaduct with a straighter, flatter surface road at ground level would be safer for drivers and easier and less expensive for the state to maintain, while reducing roadway noise and pollution in adjacent communities. This approach would also maintain weekday two-track Commuter Rail service throughout a six-to-ten-year construction period – and would be faster, cheaper, and less disruptive to build than other build options.

There is now overwhelming support for an All At-Grade design – more than 90 percent of over 500 public comments submitted to MassDOT in October 2020 supported this design, including transportation advocates, environmental organizations, businesses, universities, the City of Boston, and cities and towns in MetroWest. Our coalition urged MassDOT to select an All At-Grade design as the preferred alternative to carry forward in the environmental review process and noted the need for further design adjustments to minimize negative and maximize positive impacts to the Charles River. We greatly appreciate the support of Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) and Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) for their ongoing support of an All At-Grade design. Additional supporters of an All At-Grade design include former Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Cambridge City Manager Louis DePasquale, the Boston City Council, the Cambridge City Council, 19 Boston and MetroWest-area legislators, and 11 Worcester-area legislators.

The American Jobs Plan Can Advance This Once-in-a-Generation Project Now.

The American Jobs Plan includes a number of timely, thoughtful proposals to advance transformative projects that right the wrongs of the past while creating the transportation system of the future. For example, the plan includes \$20 billion to reconnect neighborhoods cut off by historic investments and advance racial equity, environmental justice, and affordable access, as well as \$25 billion to support ambitious projects that have tangible benefits to the regional or national economy but are too large or complex for existing funding programs. The I-90 Allston Multimodal Project is an ideal candidate for these new sources of federal funding – it would reconnect a divided environmental justice population and invest in the resilient, multimodal infrastructure needed to ensure that Greater Boston continues to grow and thrive. The project could also be advanced with funding from a future transportation reauthorization bill.

The FHWA needs to pursue environmental review of an All At-Grade design. To ensure the success of the environmental review process and ultimate project construction, **we request that you partner with us by the following:**

- **submit a written request urging the FHWA and MassDOT to pursue a refined All At-Grade design that removes the roadway from the river in the environmental review process;**
- **secure appropriate funds for the project through the American Jobs Plan and/or a future transportation reauthorization bill; and**

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- **submit a written request to the Honorable Secretary Buttigieg to provide oversight of the multimodal nature of this project during environmental review, including requiring active participation in the environmental and historic preservation processes by the Federal Transit Administration and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.**

We welcome the opportunity to brief you and your teams on this once-in-a-generation opportunity to give Boston and the region a western gateway equal to its aspirations as a leader in urban design, multimodal transportation, and environmental planning.

Please see the enclosed [full-page Boston Globe advertisement](#) (November 23, 2020) urging Governor Baker to select an All At-Grade design as the preferred alternative and [coalition letter](#) (October 30, 2020) urging MassDOT to select an All At-Grade design as the preferred alternative.

Under your leadership, the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project can serve as a national model of building back better. We stand ready to help realize your bold visions for the future of transportation in Boston and beyond and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Rick Dimino, President and CEO, A Better City
John Woods, Executive Director, Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation
Anthony D’Isidoro, President, Allston Civic Association
Fredrick Salvucci, Brighton Resident and Former State Secretary of Transportation
Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association
Fred Yalouris, Cambridge Community Representative
Laura Jasinski, Charles River Conservancy
Bradley Campbell, President, Conservation Law Foundation
Harry Mattison, I-90 Allston Task Force Member, Allston resident
Jessica Robertson, I-90 Task Force Member, Allston resident
C.A. Webb, President, Kendall Square Association
Stacy Thompson, Executive Director, LivableStreets Alliance
Magazine Beach Partners
Galen Mook, Executive Director, MassBike
Deb Pasternak, Executive Director, Mass. Sierra Club
Mary Z. Connaughton, Chief Operating Officer, Pioneer Institute
Jarred Johnson, Executive Director, TransitMatters
Stacey Beuttell, Executive Director, WalkBoston
Tim Murray, President, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
Jack Wofford, Former Deputy General Counsel, U.S. Department of Transportation,
Cambridgeport Resident

Joint Federal Delegation Letter Build Back Better
with the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project

Enclosures

cc: Honorable Charles D. Baker, Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Jamey Tesler, Acting Secretary and CEO, MassDOT
Kathleen Theoharides, Secretary, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Kim Janey, Mayor, City of Boston
Sumbul Siddiqui, Mayor, City of Cambridge
Louis DePasquale, City Manager of Cambridge
Mel Kleckner, Town Manager of Brookline
Bernard Greene, Chair, Select Board of Brookline
Joseph Curtatone, Mayor, City of Somerville
Joseph M. Petty, Mayor, City of Worcester

ADVERTISEMENT

DEAR GOVERNOR BAKER:

Don't Cling to a Relic of the Past – Tear Down the I-90 Allston Viaduct and Give Boston a Western Gateway Worthy of a Great City

State and federal officials continue to debate how to replace the crumbling Allston Viaduct, which carries eight lanes of I-90 between BU and the Charles River.

It's time they listen to the dozens of business, environmental, transportation, elected, and community leaders who all agree that putting the Mass Pike, Soldiers Field Road, and the Commuter Rail all at ground level is the only smart choice for the region.

WHY?

- Lower state maintenance costs
- Safer travel for commuters
- Continuous weekday two-track commuter rail service during construction
- Expanded transit, walking, and biking options
- Improved access to the Charles River
- Restored, resilient riverbank
- Enhanced public space and economic vibrancy



This is an opportunity to transform the future of transportation in the Commonwealth, rather than repeating yesterday's mistakes.

CHOOSE THE "MODIFIED ALL AT-GRADE" DESIGN NOW

to create a proud legacy of your leadership.

All of these groups from across the region agree and have publicly endorsed the Modified All-At Grade design.

- A Better City
- Allston Brighton CDC
- Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
- Allston Civic Association
- Boston Society of Architects
- Charles River Conservancy
- Conservation Law Foundation
- Kendall Square Association

- LivableStreets Alliance
- Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition
- Massachusetts Sierra Club
- MassBio
- Pioneer Institute
- TransitMatters
- WalkBoston
- Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

and more than a dozen additional community groups and neighborhood advocates

The following municipalities and elected officials have also publicly voiced their support for the Modified All-At Grade design.

- City of Boston
- Boston City Council
- City of Cambridge
- Cambridge City Council

- Town of Brookline
- 19 Boston and MetroWest-area legislators
- 11 Worcester-area legislators
- 2 members of the Congressional delegation



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 30, 2020

Broad-Based Coalition Unites in Support of the Modified All At-Grade Design for the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project

Coalition Includes Nearly 30 Greater Boston and MetroWest Business, Environmental, Transportation, and Community-Based Organizations

Boston, MA -- A broad-based coalition of nearly 30 organizations and prominent neighborhood advocates today released a joint comment letter urging Secretary Pollack to select the Modified All At-Grade Option as the Preferred Alternative for the Throat section of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project, affirming the coalition's opposition to the Modified Highway Viaduct and No Build Options. The letter marks an important solidification of the growing consensus among stakeholders as MassDOT looks to move forward in the permitting process for this massive infrastructure project.

Signers assert that by replacing the existing viaduct with a new at-grade highway, providing opportunities to improve transit, walking, and biking connections, the Modified All At-Grade design has the best potential to positively shape the region and protect and enhance the Charles River Basin.

The coalition's joint comment letter also amplifies the positions of the City of Boston, Boston City Council, and Cambridge City Council, which have each endorsed the All At-Grade Option.

The coalition includes 26 organizations spanning sector and geography, in addition to three prominent neighborhood advocates/Task Force members: 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 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, TransitMatters, 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, and Fred Yaloris, Cambridge resident and I-90 Task Force Member.

"The transformative benefits of the all at-grade design are clear—as is the consensus captured here today," said **Rick Dimino, President & CEO of A Better City**. "The Baker Administration must seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve mobility, enhance access to and restore the river, and create the western gateway that Boston deserves."

"It is past time for MassDOT to heed the consensus among Mayor Walsh, transportation experts, and affected neighborhoods that the all at-grade approach is the best one for Boston, for commuters, and for the river," said **Bradley Campbell, President of Conservation Law Foundation**. "The Baker Administration should start working for rather than against its own vision for the future of transportation in the Commonwealth."

“Adopting the modified at-grade option for the throat is in the best interests of commuters and local residents, and it will enhance parkland vibrancy in that area of the Charles River,” **said Jim Stergios, Executive Director of Pioneer Institute.** “With so many benefits over other options, it’s no wonder so many organizations agree.”

“Since the Mass Pike was built in the 1960s, the highway viaduct has been an impenetrable barrier between the neighborhood and the Charles River. Since the very first public meeting on this project, more than six years ago, neighborhood residents and elected officials have been consistently and passionately calling for this wall to be torn down. We’re thrilled that others from beyond the neighborhood have joined this chorus,” **said Jessica Robertson, Allston resident and member of the I-90 Intermodal Task Force,** and member of an ad hoc coalition of residents and transportation, open space, and environmental advocacy groups.

See full letter text below.

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 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
TransitMatters
Transportation for Massachusetts
WalkBoston
Worcester Chamber of Commerce
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