

Chapter 1: Introduction

In Massachusetts at the close of the nineteenth century, the momentum of labor reform, urban improvement, social welfare, and the early environmental movement was strongly influencing the ways in which public lands were being managed in the Commonwealth. Theories regarding the connections between public health and access to open space were beginning to have tangible results that were particularly evident in the development of dozens of roads on state parklands, including the Metropolitan Boston Parkway System, between 1893 and 1956. The parkway system is a highly significant part of the history of the Commonwealth that carries with it an urban, recreational, and transportation planning legacy that goes far beyond the boundaries of the state. Despite this significance, pressures such as suburban development, population growth, greatly increased traffic volumes and limited maintenance funding for the Massachusetts parkways have all put enormous strains on the system.

Originally designed as carriage roads to link and provide access to recreational areas, the function of the parkways in metropolitan Boston began to change starting in the 1920s with the emergence of the automobile. Over the next several decades, they became increasingly integrated in the regional road network. Automobiles meant changes to the parkways originally intended for horse and buggy. Parkway found elsewhere in the state suffered from limited maintenance and capital improvement funds. The pressures over the last half-century have put the parkways at risk, as unintentional incremental changes threaten to destroy their historic integrity.

In 2001, in response to the threat, the Commonwealth launched the Historic Parkways Initiative (HPI), an interagency effort involving the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Massachusetts Highway Department and the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The far-reaching goal of the Initiative was to lay the groundwork for an integrated, collaborative planning approach in the development of safe and historically appropriate protection and management policies for the state's historic parkways. The same year, the Massachusetts Historical Commission began to nominate the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston, with special emphasis on its parkways, to the National Register of Historic Places. Today, 70 of the parkways in the metropolitan Boston area are listed on the National Register of Historic Places either individually or as contributing features to other nominations. With 162 miles of parkways in over 20,000 acres of parkland in metro Boston alone, these nominations have established beyond any doubt the incredible significance of these historic resources.

With the support of a statewide steering committee and a broad base of stakeholders, the multi pronged approach of the HPI included an inventory of 42 representative parkways, support to the MHC on the development of the National

Register nomination, creation of public education materials and the development of two demonstration projects. In 2002, the Commonwealth partnered with MIT, the City of Cambridge, and NSTAR to develop the Memorial Drive Demonstration Project with the aim of preserving and adapting a nineteenth century parkway to the demands of the present day. The following year, the Mount Greylock Historic Parkway Rehabilitation Project was developed in partnership with various state agencies as well as the Berkshire Regional Planning Committee and the Mount Greylock Advisory Council. This effort was designed to restore the grandeur of the Civilian Conservation Corps-era road, while providing a safe route of travel for car, pedestrians, and bicycles.

The **Historic Parkway Preservation Treatment Guidelines** build on the previous efforts of the HPI by outlining a systematic procedure for the research, documentation, planning, design, and future maintenance of historic parkways. The guidelines identify the characteristics and conditions that call for parkway-specific solutions to preserve and strengthen those elements that contribute to the significance and character of each parkway. This manual is designed be used in concert with Mass Highway's *Project Development and Design Guide*, developed in 2006.

The goals of these guidelines are to:

- Develop a consistent collaborative approach to the planning, treatment, and maintenance of historic parkways and park roads;
- Provide a framework for decision making that balances the scenic, cultural, recreational and transportation values with the need to provide safe access and use;
- Encourage the participation of all interests in a clear, transparent planning and decision making process, and
- Raise and sustain awareness of the historical significance of the Commonwealth's parkways and park roads.

1.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles have guided the development of this manual:

A parkway is not a road, but a park with a road in it.

Parkways are first and foremost recreational resources enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of users daily. The earliest parkways were developed to create "ribbons of green" to connect open space and to provide recreational travel ways within the parks and reservation system. Built on parkland, parkways and park roads are protected by Article 97 of the State Constitution, which safeguards "the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities" of public lands. Today the parkways serve multiple recreational users, including drivers, walkers, runners

and cyclists as well as a variety of passive users. Safety and enjoyment of these resources are paramount in the consideration of all capital improvements and on-going care.



Charles River Esplanade, Boston

Parkways are historic resources.

Parkways are artifacts that reflect important changes in American culture. While their origins are in the social improvement efforts of the late nineteenth century, parkways continued to be developed into the 1950s to provide improved and efficient access to the Commonwealth's parks and open space as well as commuter routes. Recognized by the Massachusetts Historical Commission as historically significant, most parkways are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and many others are eligible for listing. A thorough understanding of the original design intent, historic integrity and character will help to guide decision-making. It is important to note, however, that as a resource type that has evolved over time, the historic parkways should not be treated as a landscape frozen in time. In those circumstances where the parkway corridor needs to be adapted or altered to accommodate contemporary needs or use, changes will be undertaken with sensitivity to history or context.

Parkways are the original multi-modal facility.

Parkways serve multiple modes of travel and should continue to function as such. Safe, comfortable and enjoyable travel should be accommodated for all users including pedestrians of all ages and abilities, bicyclists, motorists and passengers. Protecting and enhancing the landscape can be accomplished in ways that satisfy the needs of all users.

Parkway planning and preservation can only be successfully achieved through a multi-disciplinary approach.

By their nature, parkways are complex, designed and engineered systems made up of structures, vegetation, lighting, drainage, signage and other roadway related features. Addressing the larger picture (or context) through collaboration among preservation and engineering professionals is essential to the parkway design process. Throughout the process, involving the expertise of all disciplines, along with timely input from a broad range of stakeholders, will ensure the best outcome possible.

1.2 PARKWAY DEFINITION AND TYPES

DCR Parkway are distinctive in that they have a special relationship with their surrounding context and perform a unique transportation function. Historic parkways in Massachusetts differ from ordinary roadways because they are generally understood to be within a park or park-like setting; and are distinguished by their scenic and landscape qualities or by their access to such qualities.



Park Drive in Boston is a good example of the “Parkway is not a road, but a park with a road in it”.

Many of the historic parkways in the urban system are designated as “pleasure vehicle only” roadways and allow for multiple modes of travel including passenger vehicles, bicycles, motorcycles, scooters and mopeds. However, these parkways have prohibitions in place, outlined in CMR 350 4.00 that restrict use by vehicles weighing more than 5,000 pounds or exceeding an overall height of seven feet. Parkway designated as “general traffic” allow for use by all vehicles. For a list of the parkways and their designations, refer to Appendix D: National Register Nomination and Metro-Boston Historic Parkway Matrix.

Today, DCR oversees a diverse network of parkways and infrastructure. Over 70 urban parkways of metropolitan Boston alone are a major historic and recreational resource used by thousands of commuters and containing over 500 lane miles, 445 crosswalks, 187 bridges, 5000 catch basins, 500 signs, and 12,800 streetlights.¹ Other parkways across the state lie wholly within large expanses of parkland and generally carry only recreational traffic of parkland visitors.

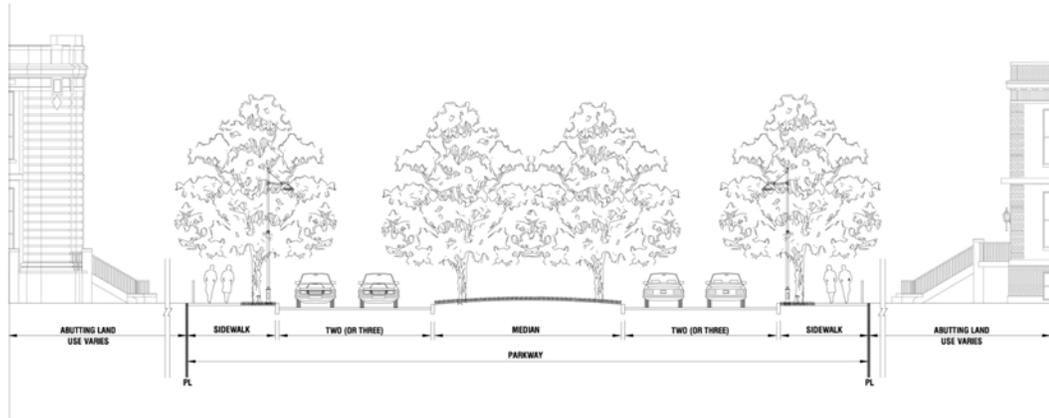
In 2002, the inventory of 42 representative parkways and park roads across the state was conducted to provide a more in-depth understanding of the resource. The inventory documented historic integrity, landscape character, physical conditions, function and use. The inventory fieldwork coupled with the historical research conducted for the preparation of the National Register nominations led to a better appreciation of parkway types, character-defining features and preservation needs.

The following typology of parkways types is a tool to assist in determining the appropriate treatment. All DCR parkways can be categorized as one of the three primary types, and many parkways can be further defined as one of five subtypes:

Primary Parkway Types	Secondary Parkway Types
Connecting Parkway Internal Park Roads Border Roads	River Parkway Ocean Parkway Summit Roads Estate Roads Vernacular Roads.

Connecting Parkway

Connecting Parkway link communities to public parks and reservations, and link parks and reservations to each other. Traveling through varied settings of dense urban neighborhoods and nearby suburban areas, these parkways are the most physically complex in the system.



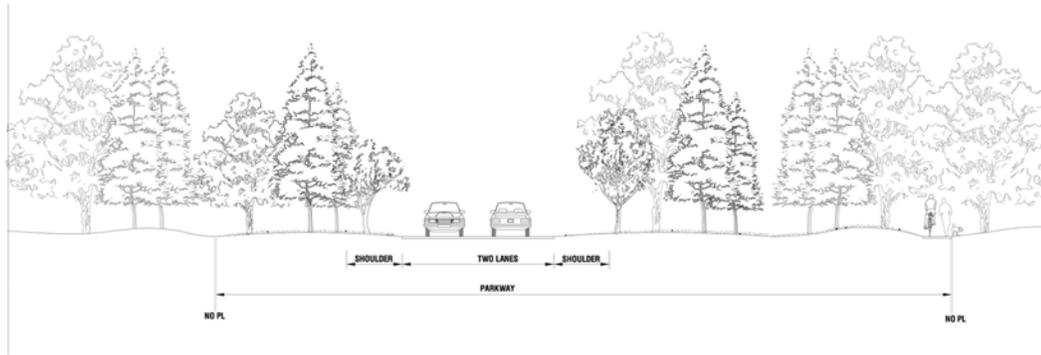
Connecting Parkway

The travelway has four to six travel lanes with widths of 10 to 14 feet. A wide median, often planted with trees, usually occupies the center of the parkway. The outside edges of the roadway are characterized by vertical granite or quarter-round concrete curbing. Beyond the curb line, turf, formal plantings of trees and shrubs and adjacent sidewalk usually define the parkway corridor. Character-defining features include, but are not limited to, routes that connect to a public reservation or to other parkways; wide planted medians; rights of way that support a park-like setting, and curvilinear alignments. The VFW Parkway, is a good example of a Connecting Parkway that links the Charles River Reservation with the West Roxbury Parkway.



The V.F.W Parkway is a Connecting Parkway in West Roxbury.

Internal Park Roads are the primary circulation system within parks, providing access to recreational sites such as picnic areas, trailheads, and overlooks. Their alignments generally follow the natural topography and are often more curvilinear, with greater changes in vertical alignment than other parkways.



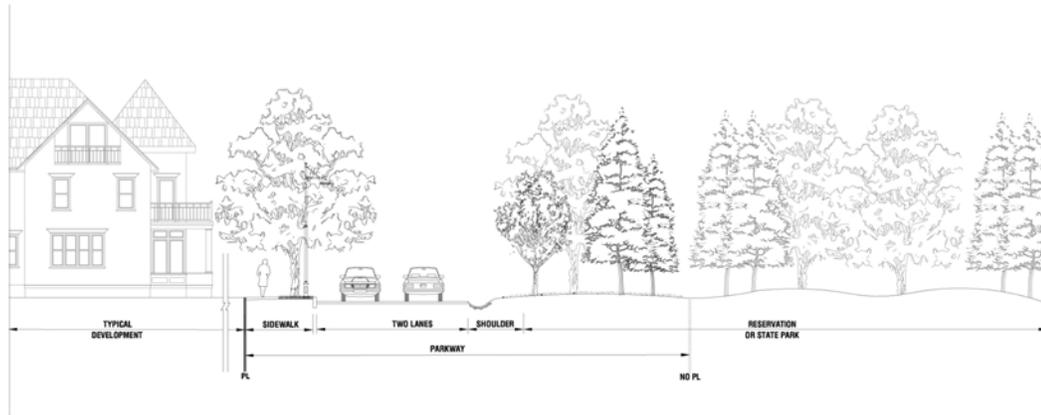
Internal Park Road

The setting around Internal Park Roads is most often wooded with occasional breaks in the forest, often at overlooks, that provide views to park features or the surrounding area. The travelway typically consists of two 10 to 12-foot-wide travel lanes with little development along the edges beyond drainage features such as swales, culverts and headwalls, and retaining walls which are often more abundant due to excessive changes in topography. Plantings are informal and more naturalistic. Barriers, boulders, guardwalls and guardrails may also be found. In addition, due to the accessibility of natural features, trailheads, and viewsheds along Internal Park Roads, unofficial pullouts are often found along their edges. Motorists, bicyclists and pedestrian often share the road. Chickatawbut Road in Blue Hill Reservation and Berry Pond Circuit Road in Pittsfield State Forest are both examples of Internal Park Roads.



Internal Park Road at Bradley Palmer State Park, Topsfield.

Border Roads historically form the edges of parks to ensure accessibility to public land. They are chiefly defined by the presence of protected open space on one side of the parkway and private, usually 19th or 20th century residential development on the other, although some Border Roads are now found within park interiors due to subsequent adjacent land acquisitions.



Border Road

The land on the park-side of the roadway is similar to that found on Internal Park Roads, with no curbing, planting strips or sidewalks. The vegetation of the park usually flanks the travelway. The non-reservation side, however, is often detailed with curbs, planting strips with trees, and sidewalks. Historic vertical granite curbing may be found, though it is often replaced with quarter-round concrete curbing. Two, undivided 10 to 12 feet wide travel lanes typically define the travelway. An example of a Border Road is Hillcrest Parkway, which marks the boundary between Middlesex Fells and adjacent private land.



Bellevue Hill Road is a Border Road, in the Stoney Brook Reservation.

Parkway Subtypes

River Parkways follow one side of a watercourse in a generally level, curvilinear alignment that parallels the shoreline. The riverine side of the travelway is generally riparian or a thin strip of developed parkland with a landscaped or naturalistic edge contrasted with private residential or commercial development on the other.



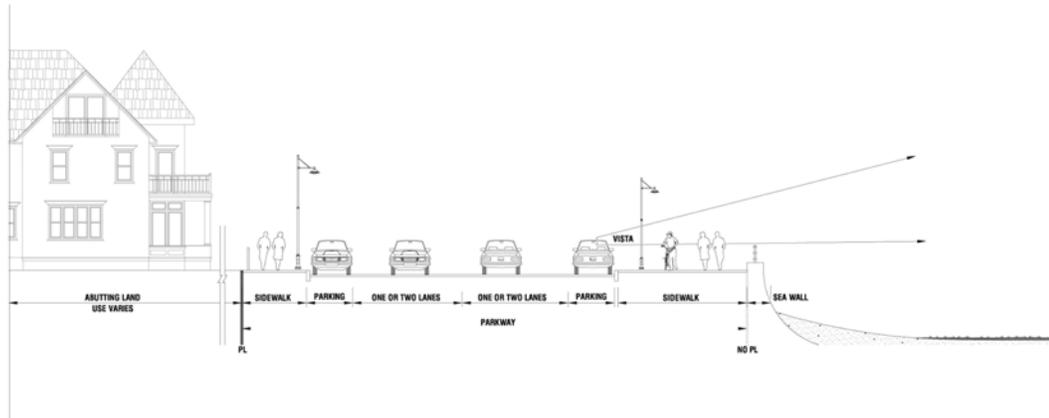
River Parkway

A River Parkway may provide both broad and screened views of the watercourse, large structures including culverts and bridges, vertical granite and quarter-round concrete curbing, and a number of barrier types including the common “Boston Pattern” railings. “The cross-section of a river parkway...varies from that similar to a connecting parkway to that of a border road or internal park road. This is the most versatile of the parkway subtypes.”²



Memorial Drive is the quintessential River Parkway.

Ocean Parkways and follow the horizontal alignment of the coastal shoreline. Expansive views of the water, inland marshes, and at times, the Boston skyline can often be seen from these parkways.



Ocean Parkway

Sections of Ocean Parkways adjacent to inland marshes may serve as berms and may contain tidegates. Adjacent inland land use is typically 19th and 20th century residential and commercial. The travelway is typically two to four lanes with no median, but with adjacent parking, vertical granite or quarter-round curbing, and wide sidewalks or promenades with pedestrian scale lighting. The vegetation on the waterside is low so that the views of the ocean are not obstructed. An Ocean Parkway always contains a seawall that may also have barriers, such as Boston Pattern railing on the top. Revere Beach Boulevard is a prime example of an Ocean Parkway.

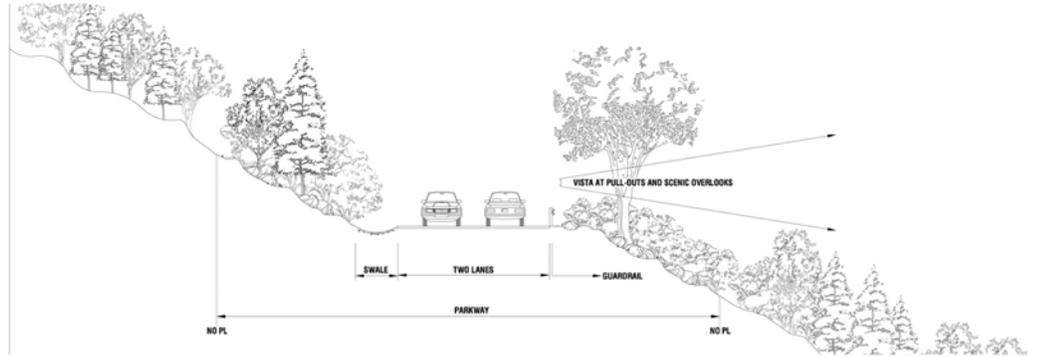


Lynn Shore Drive in 1907



Nearly a century later

Summit Roads wind up steep mountain slopes in a series of ascents, with rests at pullouts at overlooks. This unique parkway type provides an experience of rugged progress up steep, winding topography, with dramatic views on the way to the summit. Once there, a formal sense of arrival may highlight buildings, structures, overlooks and other recreational facilities found at the top.



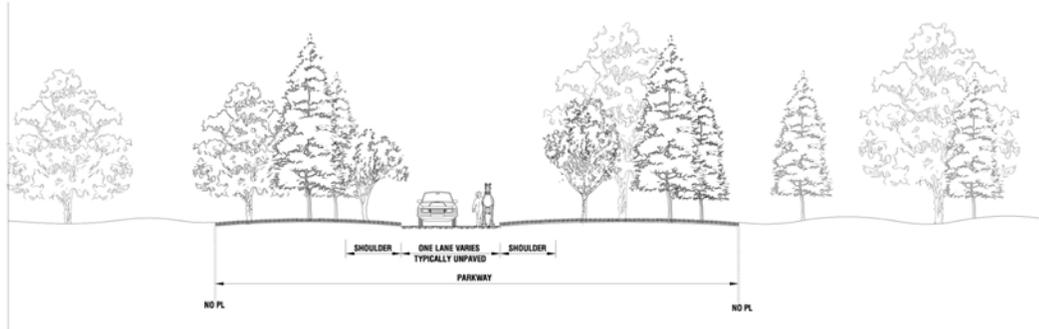
Summit Road

Dramatic long distance views are paramount to this parkway type. Travelways are typically narrow with two lanes approximately ten feet wide and flanked by steep slopes on the upslope and steep dropoffs on the downslope side. A number of different guardrail types can be found along summit roads including steel cable and rustic hewn log guardrails. Drainage features are numerous due to the varied topography and include swales, drop inlets, headwalls, and culverts on the upslope side and outlets on the downslope. Roadway lighting is often limited to entrances, and the top of the summit. Summit Road climbs Mount Sugarloaf and is typical of this parkway type.



Summit Road at Mount Sugarloaf State Reservation in South Deerfield.

Estate Roads were designed to serve private grounds, and have been adapted for use in estates-turned-parks. These travelways typically begin at a formal entry or gateway and flow through formalized landscapes that create a sense of arrival.



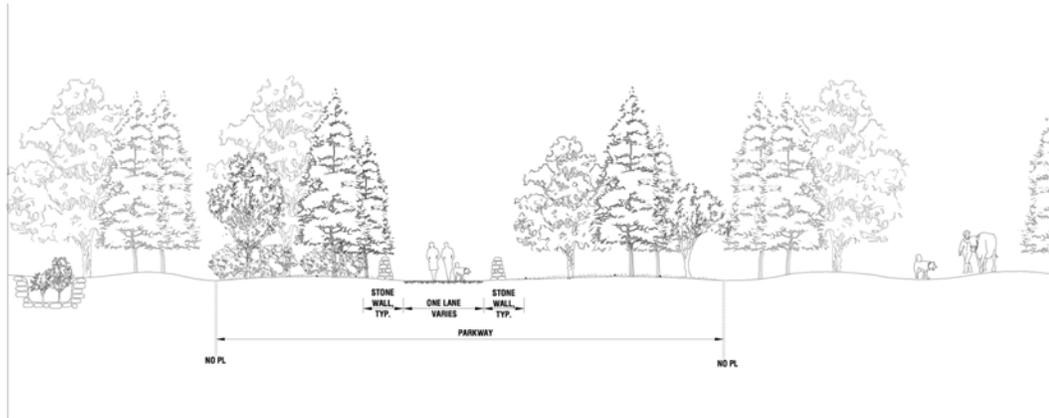
Estate Road

Estate Roads are typically one lane, approximately ten feet wide, travel over fairly level topography, and contain few if any features. The roads at Maudslay State Park are an intact system and reflect the site's former use as a private estate.



The narrow Estate Road at Maudslay State Park, Newburyport.

Vernacular Roads are a type of historic road found in virtually all forests, parks and reservations in the Commonwealth, and typically run through undeveloped areas.



Vernacular Road

Although their characteristics vary widely, Vernacular Roads are often unpaved gravel or dirt single-lane routes with adjacent stone features like walls and cellar holes, and little if any infrastructure. The former town and utility roads in Dubuque State Forest are Vernacular Roads.



Mill Street in Moore State Park is a vernacular road separating cleared land from forest and lined by stonewalls that date from early European settlement.

¹ *FY 2005 Annual Report, Toward World Class Parks and Conservation* (Boston, Massachusetts: Department of Conservation and Recreation, 2006), page 2.

² Virginia H. Adams et al., *Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, December 2002, Section F Continuation Sheet, pages 5-6.