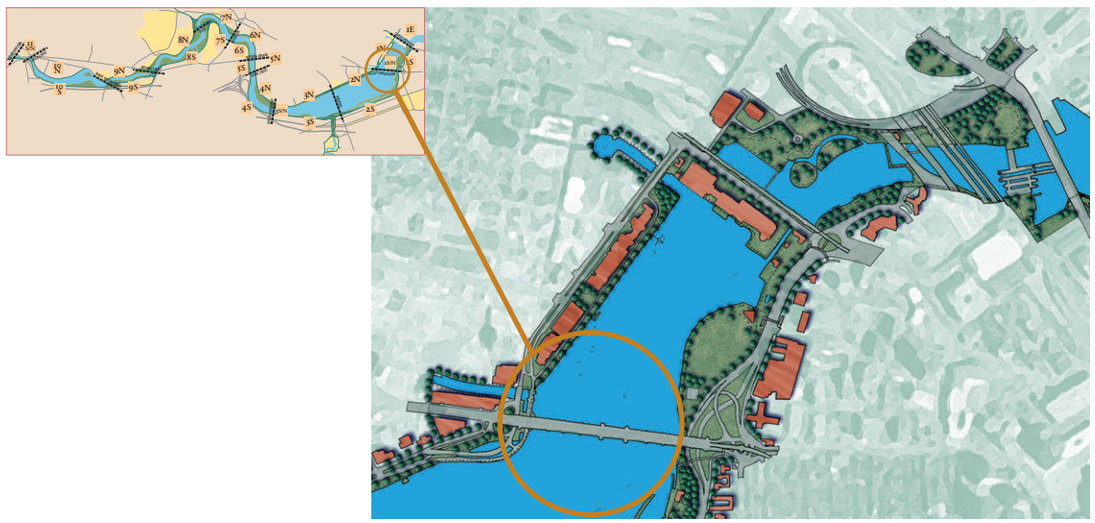
- **Redesign the Lee Pool as a place for large gatherings** and as a multi-use (rather than single-use) facility. A raised landscape platform facing south, for example, could provide an alternative stage area for large events. Public bathrooms, phones, and water fountains in this area are essential.



LONGFELLOW BRIDGE (1N&S)

Key Resource

- *Longfellow Bridge (1906)*

History

Located at the site of the 1793 West Boston Bridge, the Cambridge Bridge was designed by Edmund Wheelwright and engineered by William Jackson and completed in 1906 (it was renamed for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1927). Viking ships depicted on four of the bridge's stone piers recall the now-discredited legend that Leif Ericson sailed up the Charles River. The Longfellow (or "Salt-and-Pepper") Bridge is the most architecturally distinguished bridge on the Charles River.

Existing Conditions and Issues

The structural condition of the bridge is beyond the scope of this Master Plan but has been documented in other reports. Though structurally sound, considerable effort and money will be needed to restore this landmark.

The connections from the Longfellow Bridge to the river paths on both banks have been broken, making the bridge one of the weakest links in the reservation. Storrow Drive and the Cambridge Viaduct, designed to pass under the bridge, create difficult pedestrian connections along the river.

On the north side of the bridge, the viaduct has isolated a piece of the Cambridge Esplanade, including the access stairs to the bridge. These stairs are now stranded on an island between lanes of high-speed traffic. There is no safe or obvious connection between the river path and the bridge walkway. The pathway along the viaduct is less than four feet wide, has poor drainage, and collects sand and other debris. Some users consider it the worst path segment in the Basin.

On the Boston side, flights of stairs connect the Longfellow Bridge to the pedestrian bridge, but bicyclists and skaters find them difficult to negotiate. People with physical disabilities find them impossible. The alternative of continuing into the Charles Circle intersection is not much better. Here the pedestrian path and roadway shoulder end entirely, with no crosswalk. Cyclists crossing to Boston currently use the shoulder, which vanishes at the end of the bridge as the roadway expands from two lanes to three. Some of the worst conflicts in the reservation between bicyclists, pedestrians, and cars occur here.

NARROW WALKWAY ON THE UPSTREAM SIDE OF THE LONGFELLOW BRIDGE

While the downstream sidewalk on the bridge is of adequate width and in acceptable condition, it does not connect to the reservation on either end. Consequently, most people using the Longfellow as part of a loop around the reservation use the upstream walkway. This walkway was narrowed several years ago to make room for a bicycle lane that was not repainted when the bridge was repaved. Only four feet wide, the sidewalk is too narrow to handle the walkers, runners, inline skaters, and bicyclists who use it. Poorly drained, it collects sand and other debris; its concrete surface has spalled severely, creating potholes. The Longfellow Bridge remains a major bicycle link between Cambridge and Boston despite the lack of a bicycle lane and the conditions at the Charles Circle intersection.

Goals

- **Preserve and maintain the Longfellow Bridge as a major landmark in the Charles River Basin.**
- **Improve connections across and along this segment.**
- **Enhance the safety and comfort of pedestrians, cyclists, skaters, and joggers crossing the Longfellow Bridge.**

Recommendations

- **Restore the Longfellow Bridge, including its rails, steps, and towers.** Provide architectural lighting of the sculptural buttresses and repeating arches of this landmark bridge.

- **Restripe the bicycle lane on the upstream side of the bridge, add a new bicycle lane on the downstream side, and provide designated lanes for bicycles—even though they would be substandard—into Charles Circle.** The addition of bicycle lanes would remove most, if not all, bicycle traffic from the walkways by providing a safe place for cyclists to ride on the road. In addition to creating and repainting the bike lanes, the automobile travel lanes should be narrowed in order to expand the pinched upstream walkway.

- **Widen walkway on the upstream side of the bridge by one to two feet and improve drainage.**

- **Redesign and reconstruct the existing pedestrian bridge system between the MBTA's Charles/MGH Station and the reservation.** A new pedestrian bridge should be wide enough to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians and connect both Charles/MGH Station and the Longfellow Bridge to the Esplanade without the need for steps. The new pedestrian bridge should be fully accessible but have minimal impact on the historic integrity of the Longfellow Bridge; it would form a crucial link in the pedestrian system as well as a public transportation gateway to the river. The design of new pedestrian connections to the Esplanade should be fully coordinated with the current MBTA reconstruction of the Charles/MGH Station.

- **Improve the pathways running from Community Boating underneath the Longfellow Bridge** to Lederman Field by removing parking under the bridge and providing a pathway set back from the parkway.

- **When reconstruction of the Cambridge Viaduct occurs, an additional ten to twelve feet should be added to the outside of the pathway to create a generous multiuse path** connection from the East Cambridge Front (segment 1N) to the Cambridge Esplanade (segment 2N).