



# McGrath Boulevard Project

*The project will remove the elevated overpass on McGrath Highway (Route 28) and replace it with a ground-level road.*

Project No. 607981 | August 2024





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# Introduction

Removing the McCarthy Overpass has been a long-time desire for Somerville residents and has had continued support from the City of Somerville.

The McGrath Boulevard Project aligns with the community's desire for a street-level multimodal boulevard and modernizes the roadway for all users.



**Renderings of the concept design:** Washington Street intersection (left); Somerville Avenue intersection (right)



# Project Background



## 2011 - 2013

The McCarthy Overpass was identified as nearing the end of its useful life and in need of replacement. The MassDOT study titled "Grounding McGrath" (2013) recommended removing the overpass and replacing it with a street-level multimodal boulevard.

## 2015 - 2018

MassDOT convened the McGrath Boulevard Project Development Working Group to develop a consensus-driven concept design for the new street-level boulevard. The project was included in the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) [Destination 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan](#) for Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2025-2030, as it aligns with regional goals for safety, system preservation and modernization, capacity management and mobility, transportation equity, clean air and sustainable communities, and economic vitality.

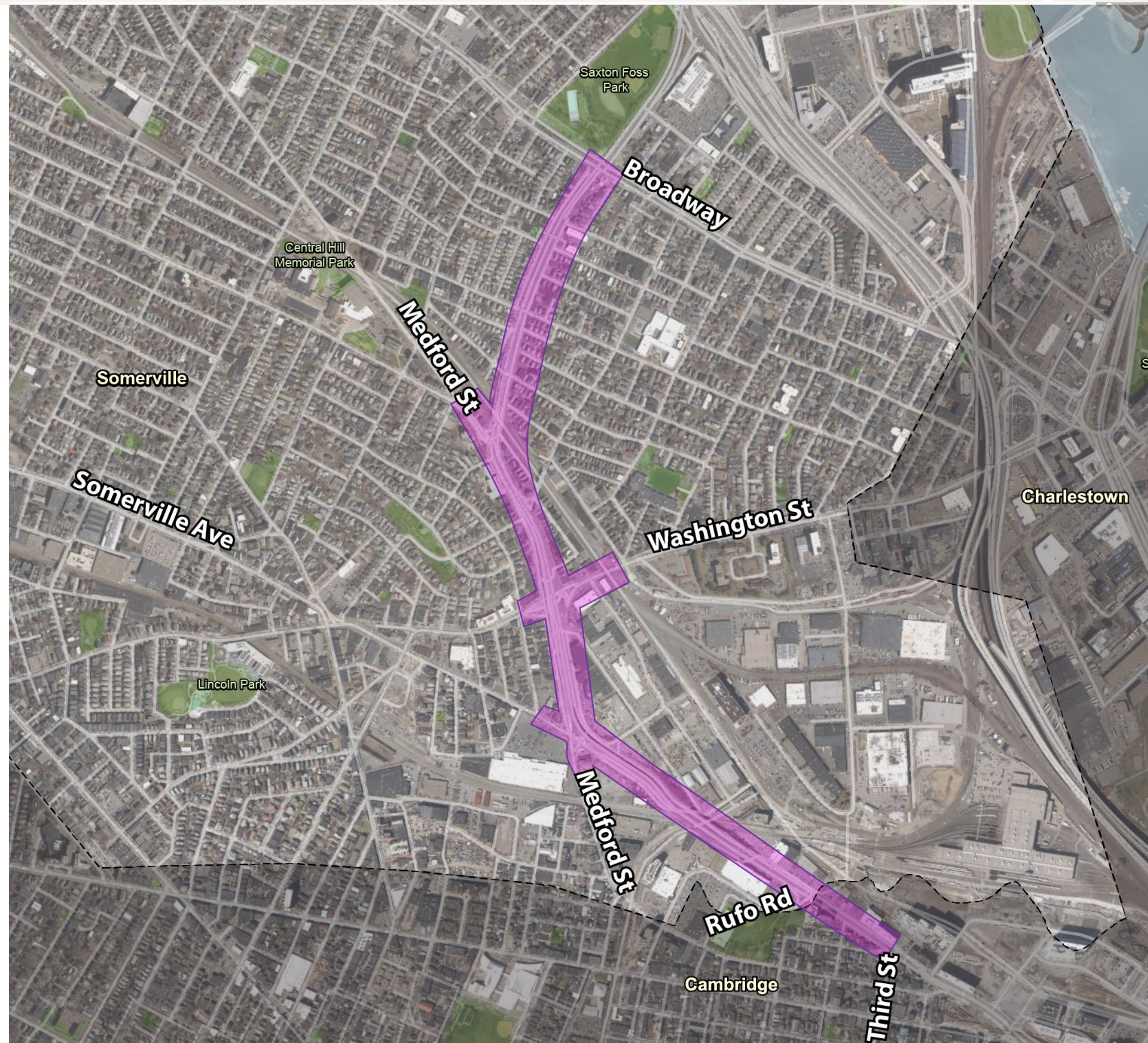
## 2021 - present

MassDOT is currently preparing the 25% design. The project has received \$20 million of both federal and state construction funding starting in 2027. The total project cost of approximately \$100 million is anticipated to be funded over four years (2027-2030). To learn more about the project's funding sources, timeline and alignment with regional transportation goals, review the [Boston Region MPO's FFY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#).



# Project Area

The project focuses on the segment of McGrath Highway between Third Street in Cambridge to the south and Broadway in Somerville to the north.





# Project Area

It is adjacent to several Somerville neighborhoods, including East Somerville, Union Square, Brickbottom, Winter Hill, and Prospect Hill.





# Project Area

Removing the overpass will help reconnect these neighborhoods by improving multimodal connections through the project area.





# McGrath Boulevard Project

## Project Goals

- **Safety improvements** to support Vision Zero objectives
- Improve **neighborhood connections** to nearby amenities
- **Resilient infrastructure** to face our changing climate
- Improves **pedestrian and bicycle conditions** and comfort

## Reasons for the Project

- McCarthy Viaduct overpass is structurally deficient
- McGrath Highway is overbuilt for the number of vehicles that need to use it
- Accessibility standards not met along the corridor



# McGrath Boulevard Project

## Benefits of a multimodal corridor

- Creates opportunities to shift new development trips to sustainable modes
- Supports the citywide goal for 75% of work-related trips by non-car modes by 2040, as detailed in the [Somervision2040 Comprehensive Plan](#)
- Takes full advantage of the project's proximity to the MBTA Green Line Extension and the Somerville Community Path

*The McGrath Highway is a critical part of the regional transportation system, and this project presents opportunity to re-assess the corridor ensuring safe and efficient access for all users.*

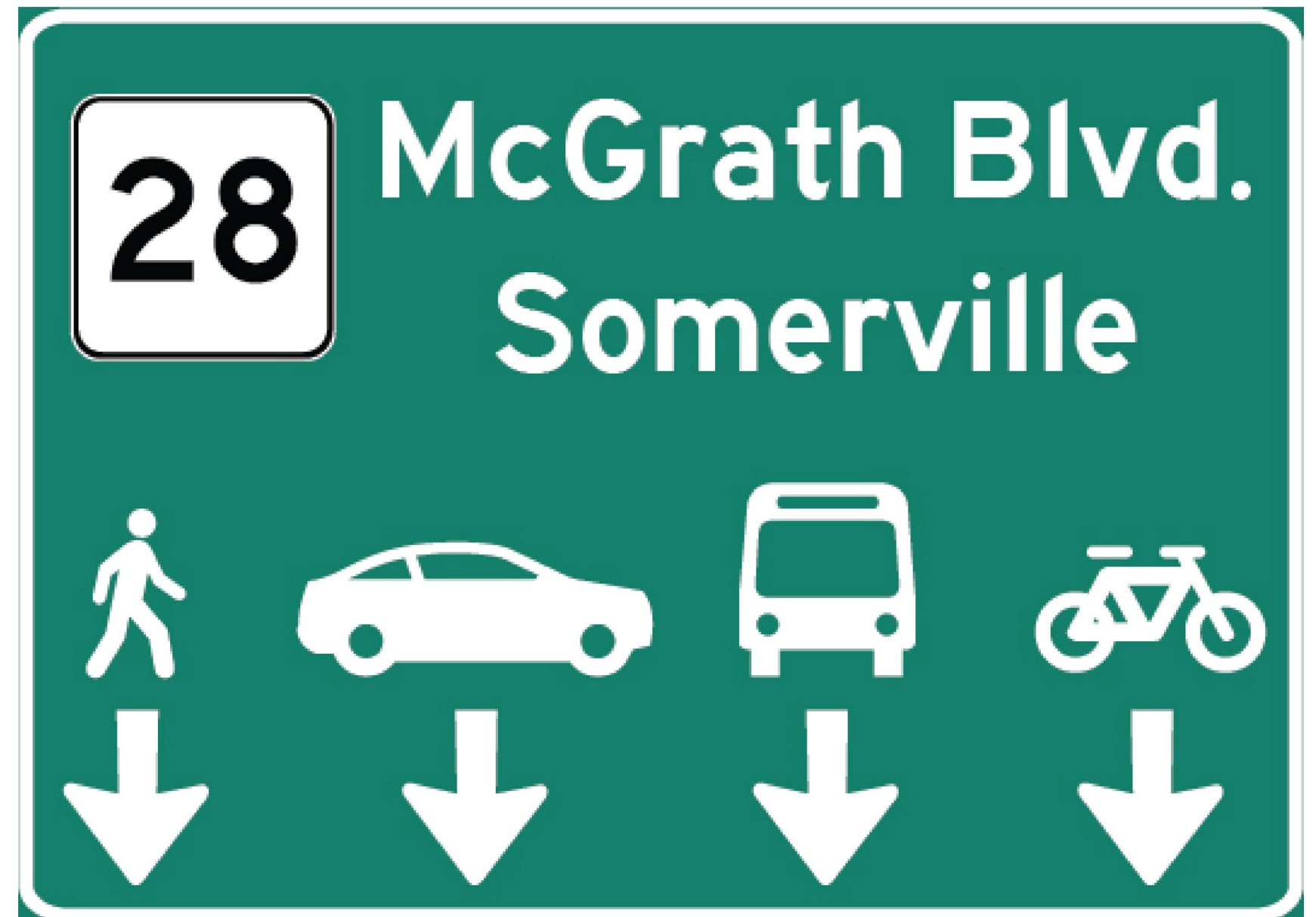


# Concept Design

## Design Process

MassDOT convened the McGrath Boulevard Project Development Working Group to inform and advise the agency with local knowledge, and to help develop the concept design. The Working Group included a wide range of perspectives, including representatives from community-based organizations, public agencies, elected officials, and other local stakeholders.

With support from the Working Group, the project team analyzed various build alternatives including potential cross-sections and intersection configurations. The Working Group also provided guidance on green space allocation, pedestrian and bike connectivity, and the overall vision for the new McGrath Boulevard.





## Preferred Alternative

Through the consensus-driven concept design process, MassDOT developed the design referred to as the “Preferred Alternative”. This design includes the following key elements:

- The McCarthy Overpass is removed, and McGrath Highway is transformed into a street-level boulevard
- One travel lane in both northbound and southbound directions is removed
- Separated and buffered bike lanes are installed both northbound and southbound
- The design also includes improved pedestrian and bike connections, including a new at-grade crossing made possible by the removal of the overpass.



**Existing Condition**   Looking south from Washington Street





Concept Design      Looking south from Washington Street





Existing Condition    Looking north at the Somerville Avenue intersection





Concept Design

Looking north at the Somerville Avenue intersection





## Roadway Reallocation

Looking north near Otis Street

- One travel lane removed from each direction leaving two general purpose lanes in each direction
- Separated bike lanes in each direction
- Removal of overpass





Key Design Elements

Transform highway into a boulevard





## Improvements for pedestrians

In addition to providing new pedestrian connections across McGrath Highway, the project will significantly improve sidewalk and crosswalk conditions along the new boulevard.

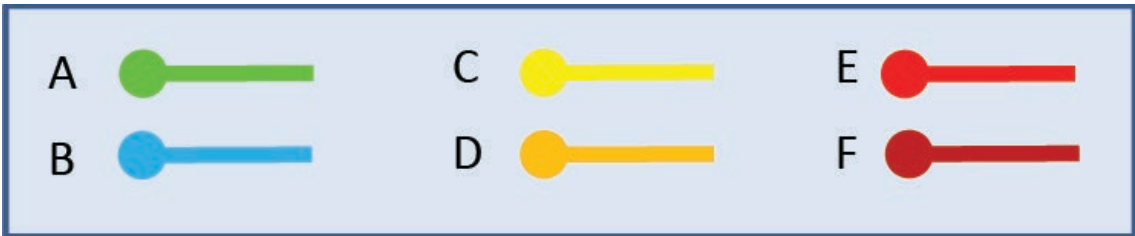
**Pedestrian Level of Service (LOS)** is used to measure the overall conditions of the pedestrian facilities within the corridor with letter grades ranging **from A** (most pedestrian-friendly) **to F** (least pedestrian-friendly). Pedestrian LOS is based on a number of factors, including sidewalk width and condition, separation from the travel lane, lighting, shade from trees, and turning conflicts with cars.





# Existing pedestrian conditions

Current pedestrian conditions range from **LOS C** to **LOS E**, due to poor sidewalk conditions, minimal separation from the travel lane, and lack of exclusive pedestrian signal phasing at some intersections, among other factors.



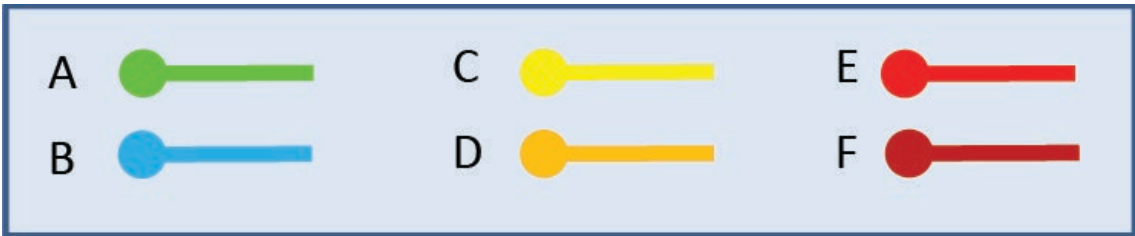
Pedestrian Level of Service (LOS)



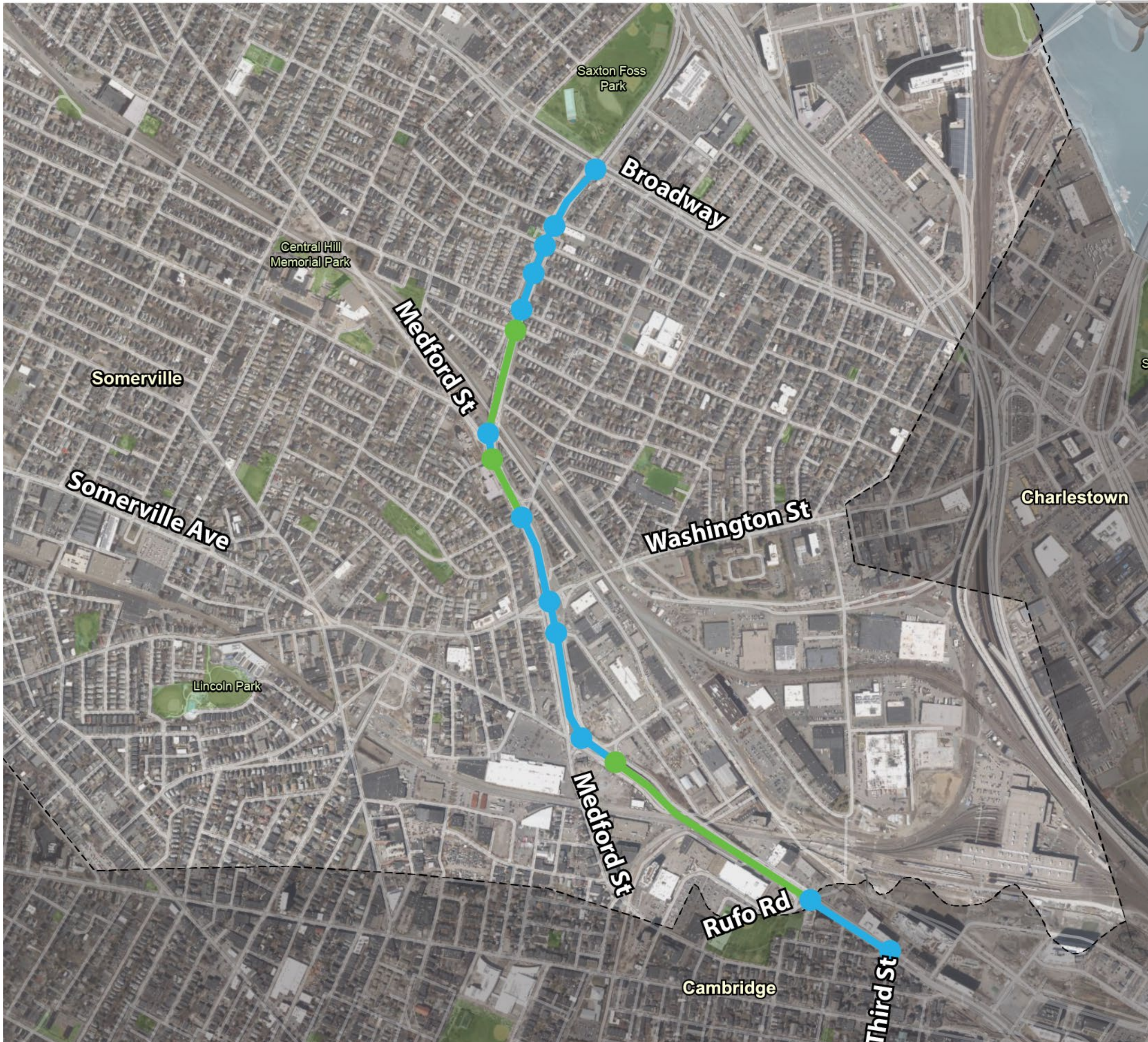


# Future pedestrian conditions

The project will substantially improve the pedestrian experience, with future conditions ranging from **LOS A to LOS B**. With new and improved sidewalks, expanded buffers from the travel lane, improved lighting, additional shade from trees, and reduced conflicts with turning vehicles, McGrath Boulevard will be a significantly more pedestrian-friendly roadway.



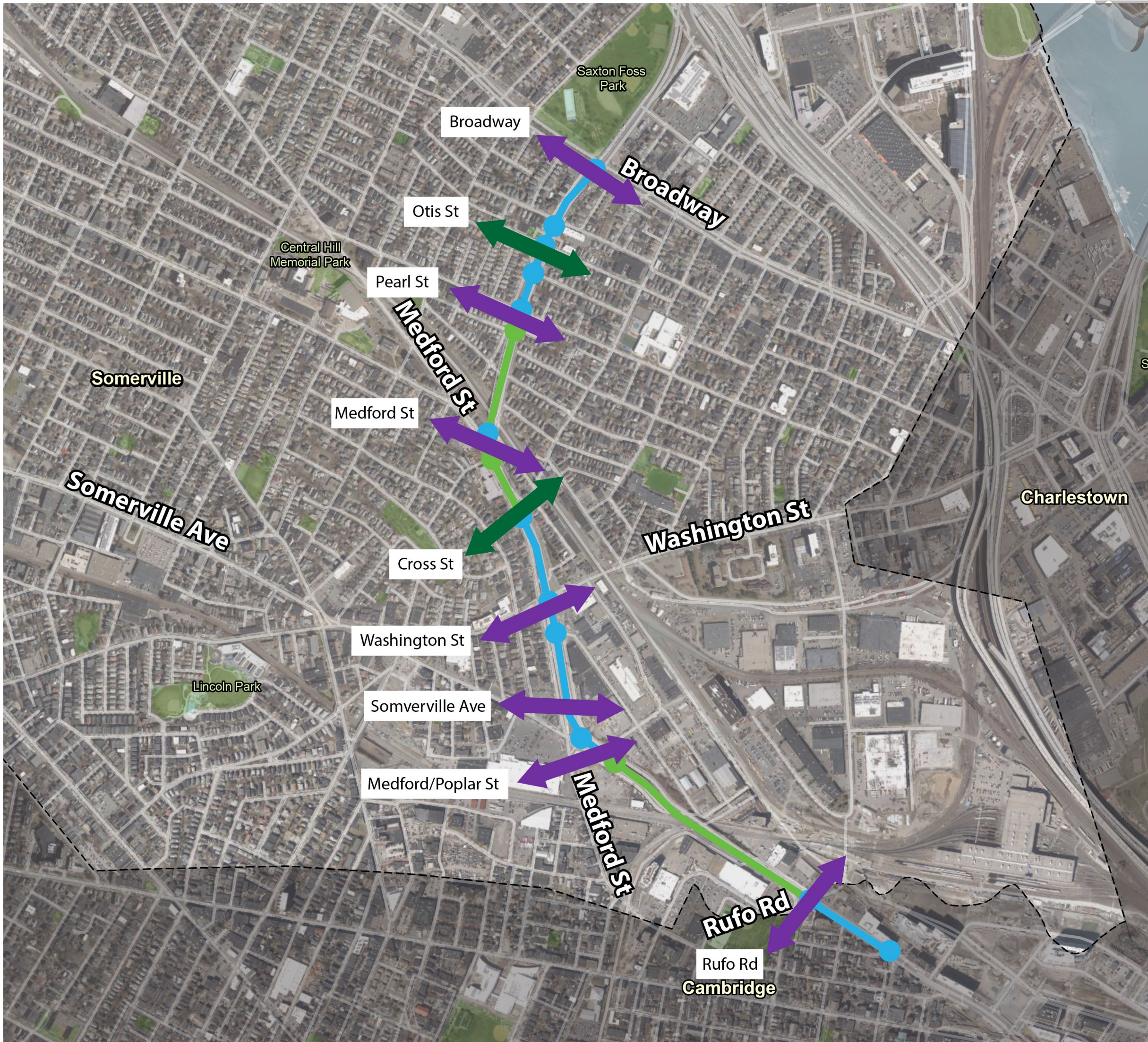
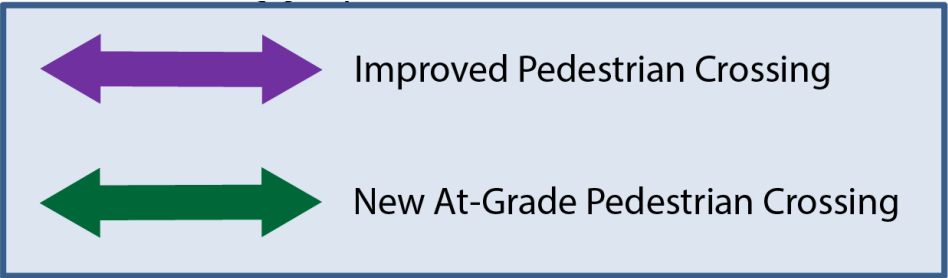
Pedestrian Level of Service (LOS)





# New and improved pedestrian crossings

Improvements to pedestrian conditions and new infrastructure will enable easier pedestrian access across McGrath Boulevard, re-connecting neighborhoods that are currently divided by the overpass.





## Improvements for bikes

New and improved bicycle infrastructure, including separated bike lanes, will improve biking conditions and safety along the roadway while enabling connections between neighborhoods and transit hubs.

**Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS)** is used to measure overall bicycle conditions and comfort within the corridor. The LTS score is based on several factors, including conditions of bike facilities, separation from general purpose traffic, traffic volumes, and vehicle speeds. Bicycle LTS ranges from **LTS 1** (suitable for all ages and abilities) to **LTS 4** (suitable only for the most experienced bike riders).





# Existing bicycle conditions

McGrath Highway currently has no bike lanes, resulting in a rating of LTS 4 along the entire corridor. The LTS 4 rating discourages most potential users from biking, as it is only suitable for the most experienced bike riders.



Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS)



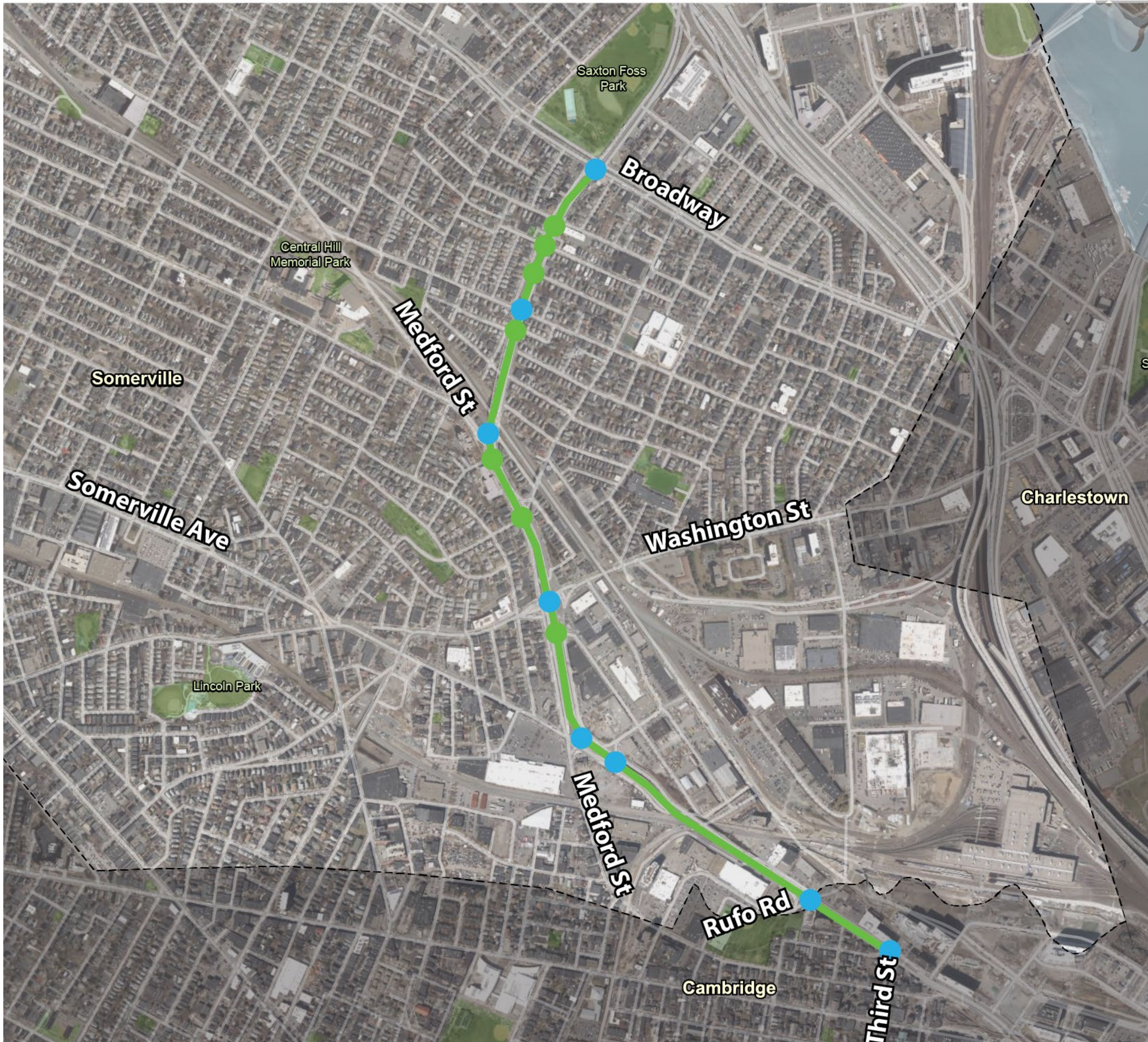


# Future bicycle conditions

With new and improved bike infrastructure, the majority of the corridor will be rated LTS 1 or LTS 2, which is suitable for most potential bike riders, as separation from the general purpose lane will increase biking comfort for all ages and abilities.



Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS)





# Bicycle connections

Separated and buffered bike lanes along McGrath Boulevard will provide a critical North to South link in the regional network of bike facilities.

- Existing Bike Facility
- Planned Bike Facility
- Somerville Community Path Extension
- MBTA Green Line
- MBTA Orange Line
- MBTA Station





## Improvements for transit

The design will integrate existing and future transit services, improve bus stop conditions, and facilitate bicycle and pedestrian connections to transit.

The design will include floating bus stops to provide improved transit service while accommodating bikes and pedestrians and will enable multimodal connections to the MBTA Green Line Extension.

Additional transit enhancements, such as dedicated bus lanes, were evaluated for the length of the McGrath Boulevard corridor, but measurable benefits were ultimately not realized.

Please visit the MBTA's [Bus Network Redesign website](#) for more information on upcoming changes to bus service in the project area.



Example of a floating bus stop on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston



# Concept Map

Explore elements of the concept design on the following pages.

Please note that the illustration is a preliminary design concept and is subject to change as the design continues to be refined.

Legend

Boulevard

Bridge Area

Proposed Bike Improvements

Proposed Walkway / Plaza Area

Existing Walkway

Proposed Hardscape Area

Proposed Landscape Area

Proposed Bus Stop/Lane

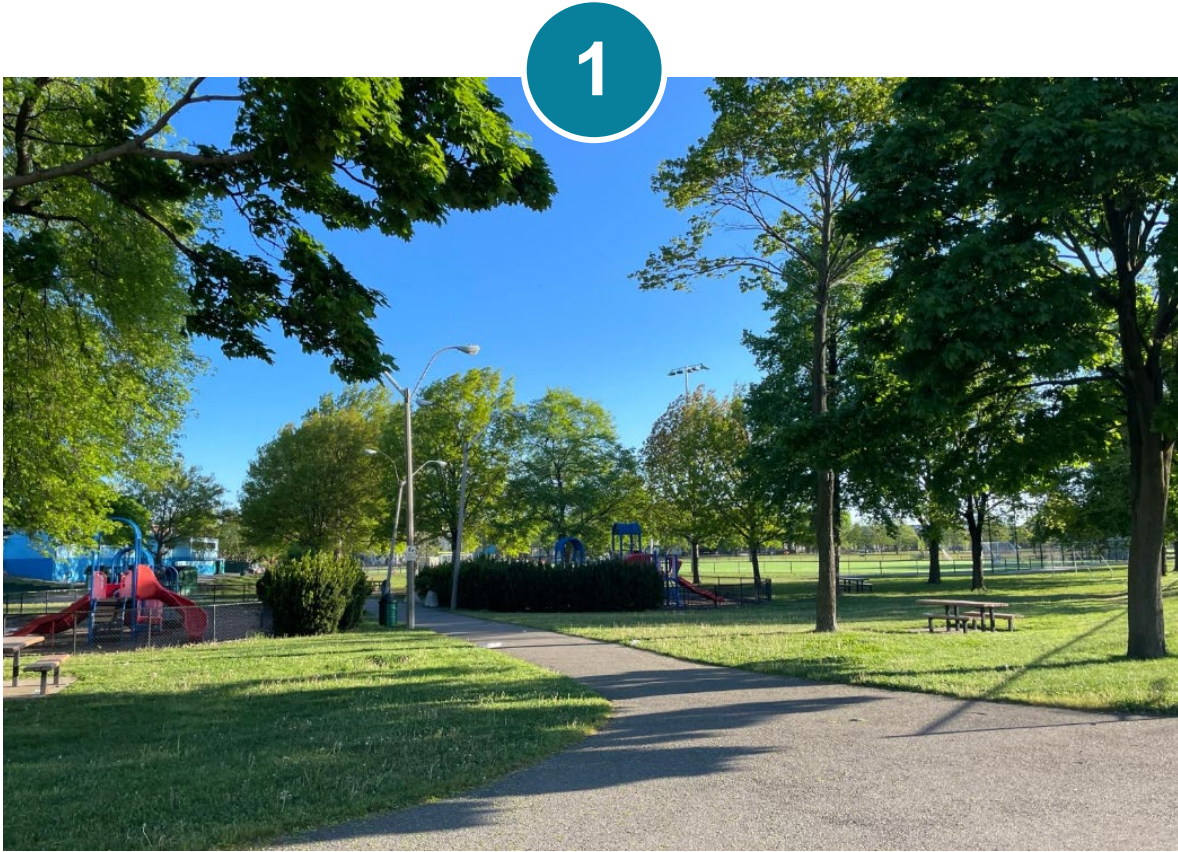
Proposed Bus Loading Area

Existing Community Path



# Connections to Foss Park

The design facilitates safer pedestrian and bicycle connections to Foss Park.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





# Pedestrian bridge at Otis Street

The existing pedestrian bridge is not accessible to all users and will be replaced with a street-level crosswalk. Structural elements of the bridge containing artwork will likely remain at the Cremin Playground.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





# At-grade crossing for both pedestrians and bikes

The pedestrian bridge will be replaced with a crossing with appropriate traffic control, enabling walking and biking connections across the boulevard.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





# Two-way separated bike path

Two-way separated bike paths will be provided along the majority of the corridor where space allows.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





# Virginia Street at McGrath

Revised access with McGrath Boulevard at select side streets (Virginia, Otis, and Bonair) to separate local and regional traffic.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





# One-way bike lane southbound

A one-way bike lane will be installed along the west side of McGrath between Medford Street and Pearl Street in addition to the two-way bike path on the east side.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





# Lowell Line bridge

Currently undergoing emergency repairs with long-term rehabilitation to be programmed.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.



Legend	
	Boulevard
	Bridge Area
	Proposed Bike Improvements
	Proposed Walkway / Plaza Area
	Existing Walkway
	Proposed Hardscape Area
	Proposed Landscape Area
	Proposed Bus Stop/Lane
	Proposed Bus Loading Area
	Existing Community Path



# Improved crossings along corridor

Updated crossings will improve conditions for people walking and biking across and along McGrath.



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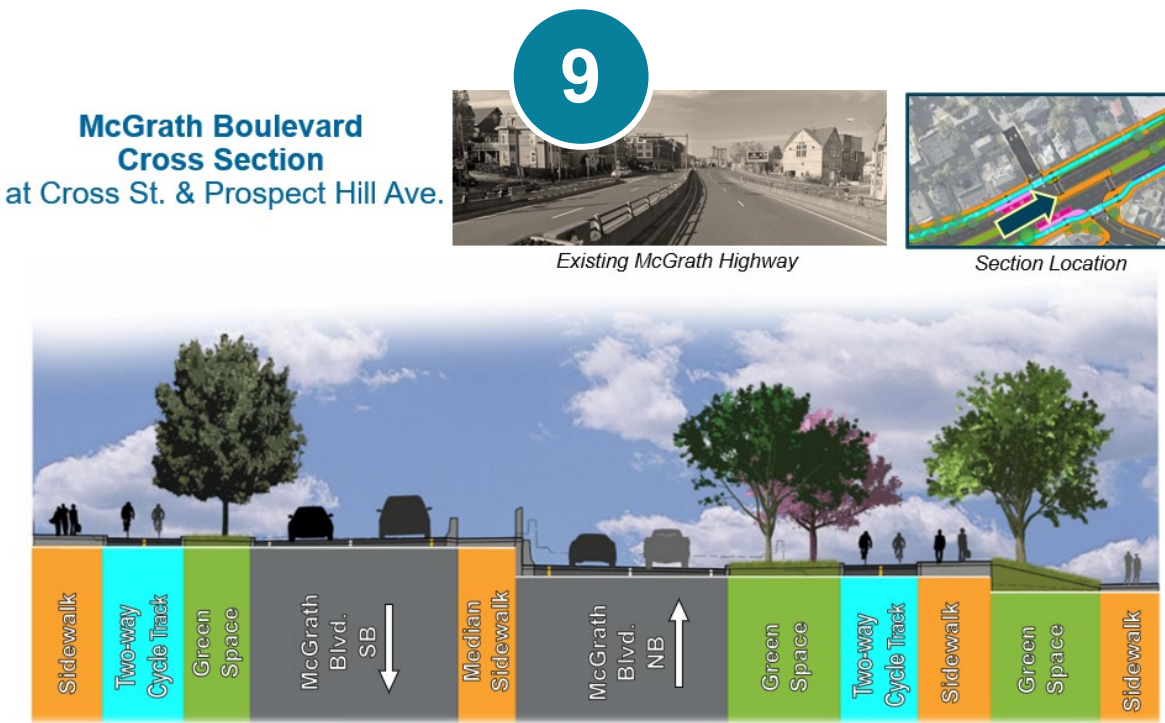


Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.



# New crossing at Cross Street

To overcome the vertical challenge and provide a pedestrian crossing of McGrath at Cross Street, the design includes two crosswalks with a median sidewalk.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.



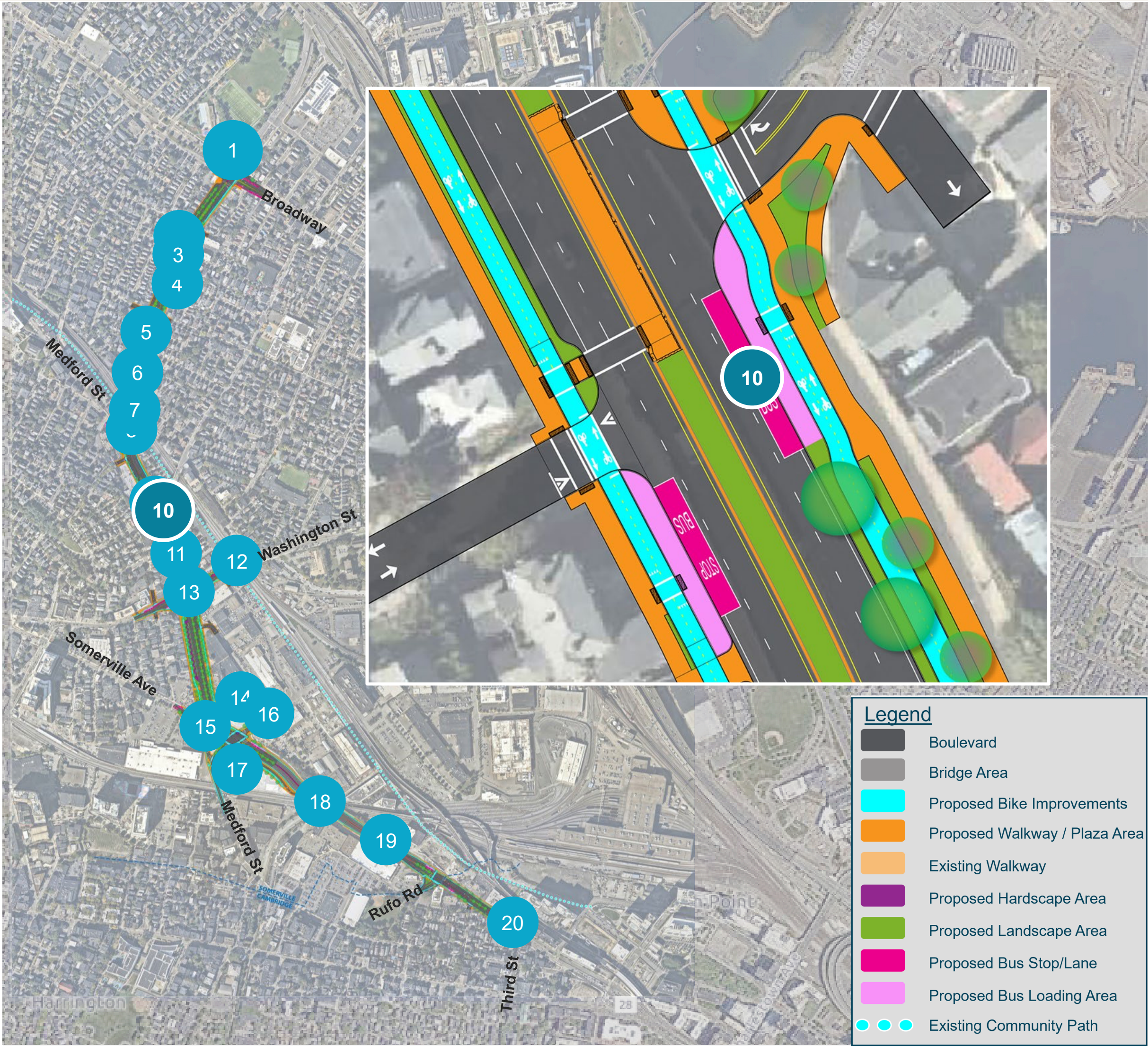


# Floating bus stops

Bus stops will be designed to improve transit operations and amenities for bus riders while retaining protected space for bike lanes.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





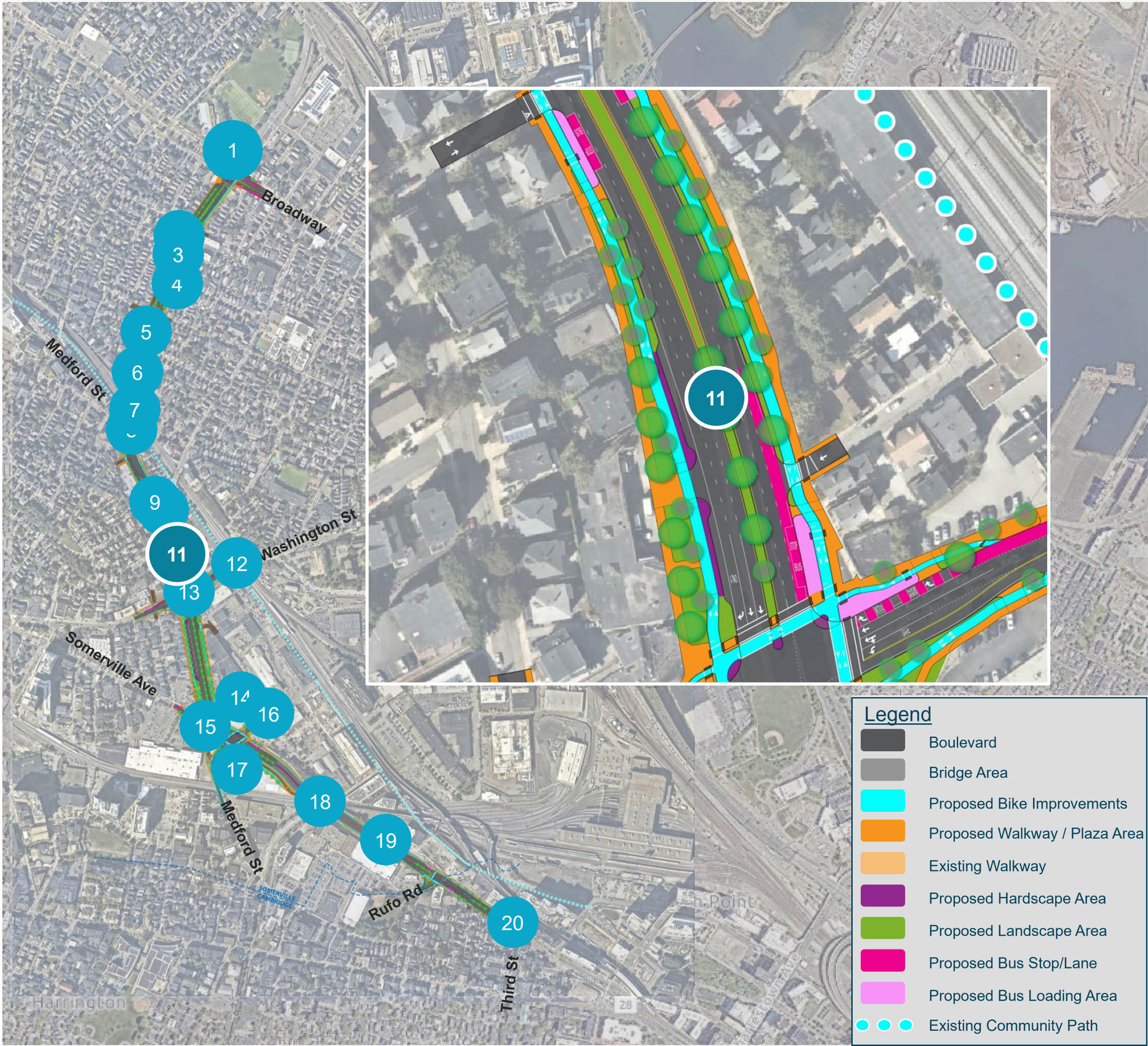
# Planted median

Planted medians will be included where width allows along the corridor.



Image source: Environmental Management, Inc

Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.



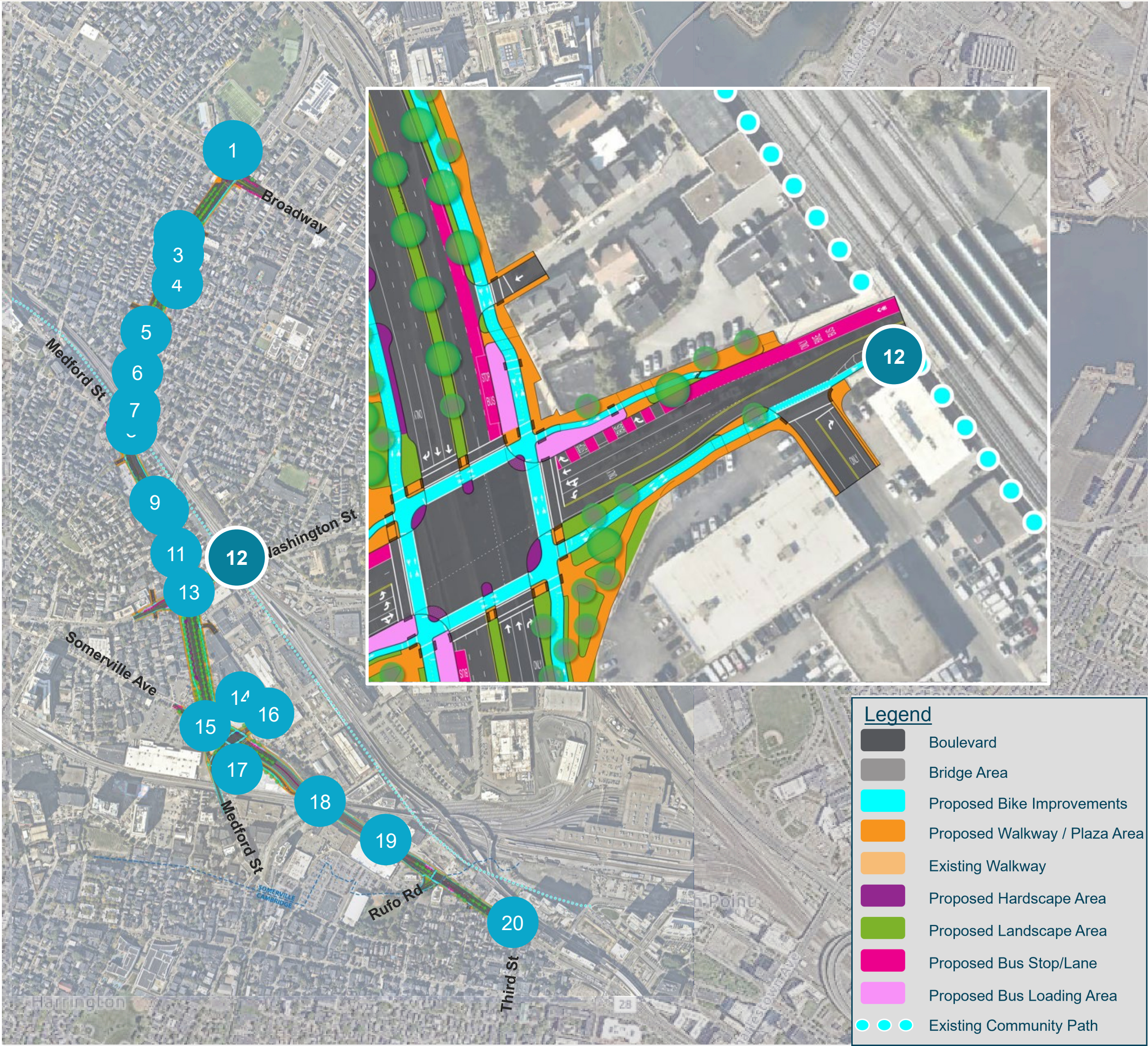


# Pedestrian/bike facilities connecting to the Somerville Community Path extension

Bike lanes and sidewalks will connect McGrath to the Somerville Community Path extension at the East Somerville Station.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





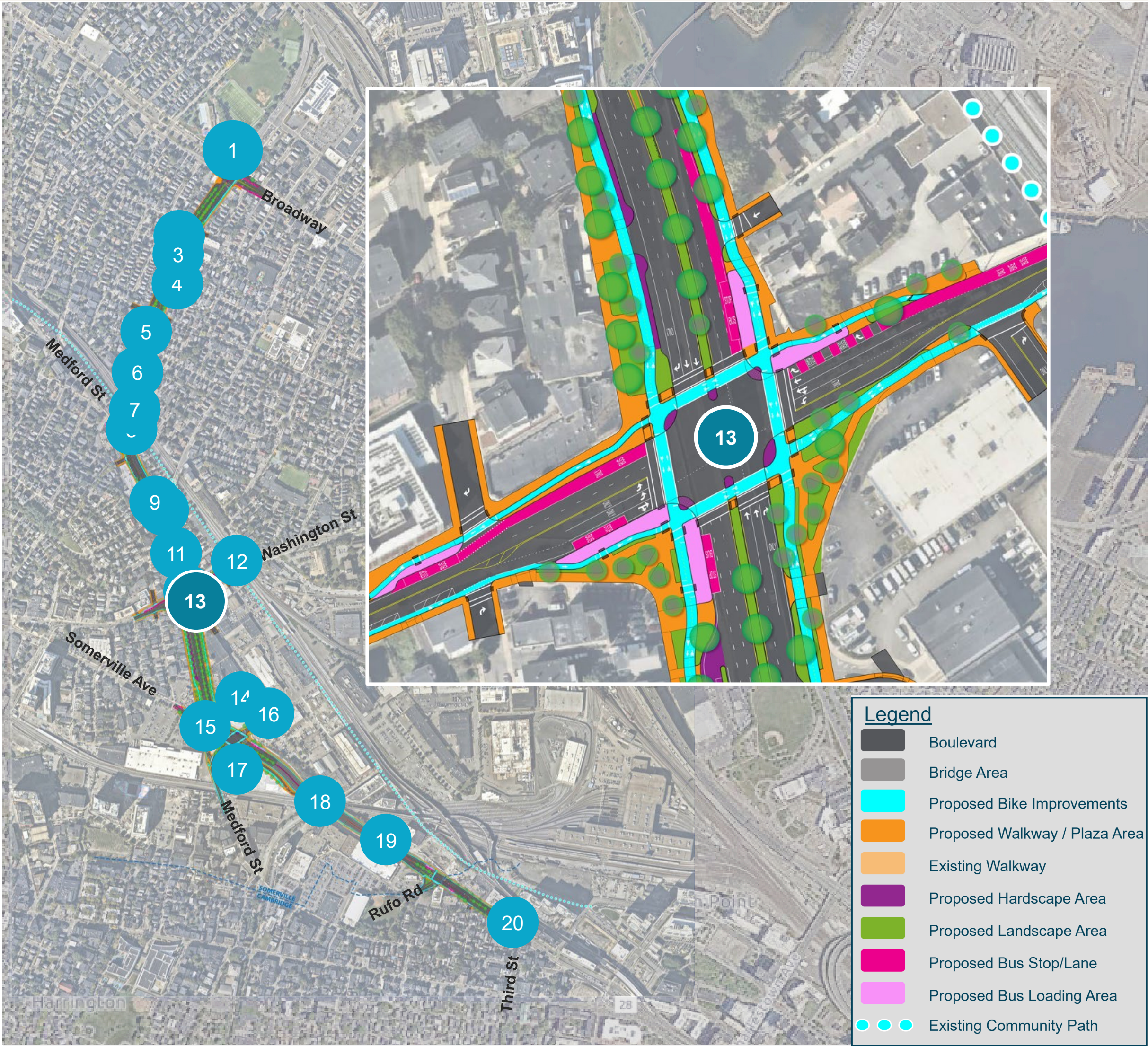
# Washington Street intersection improvement

A conventional intersection design at Washington Street simplifies the intersection and provides safety improvements for all modes.

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Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





# Poplar Street pump station

The design will coordinate with the ongoing development of the Poplar Street Pump Station.

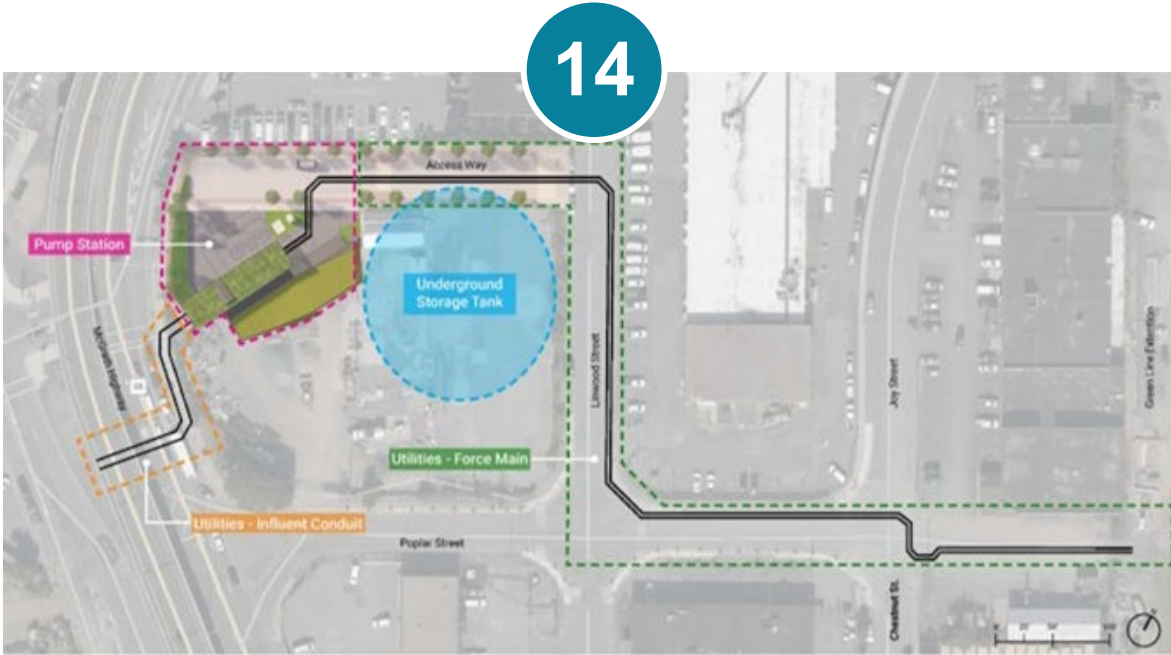


Image source: City of Somerville

Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.



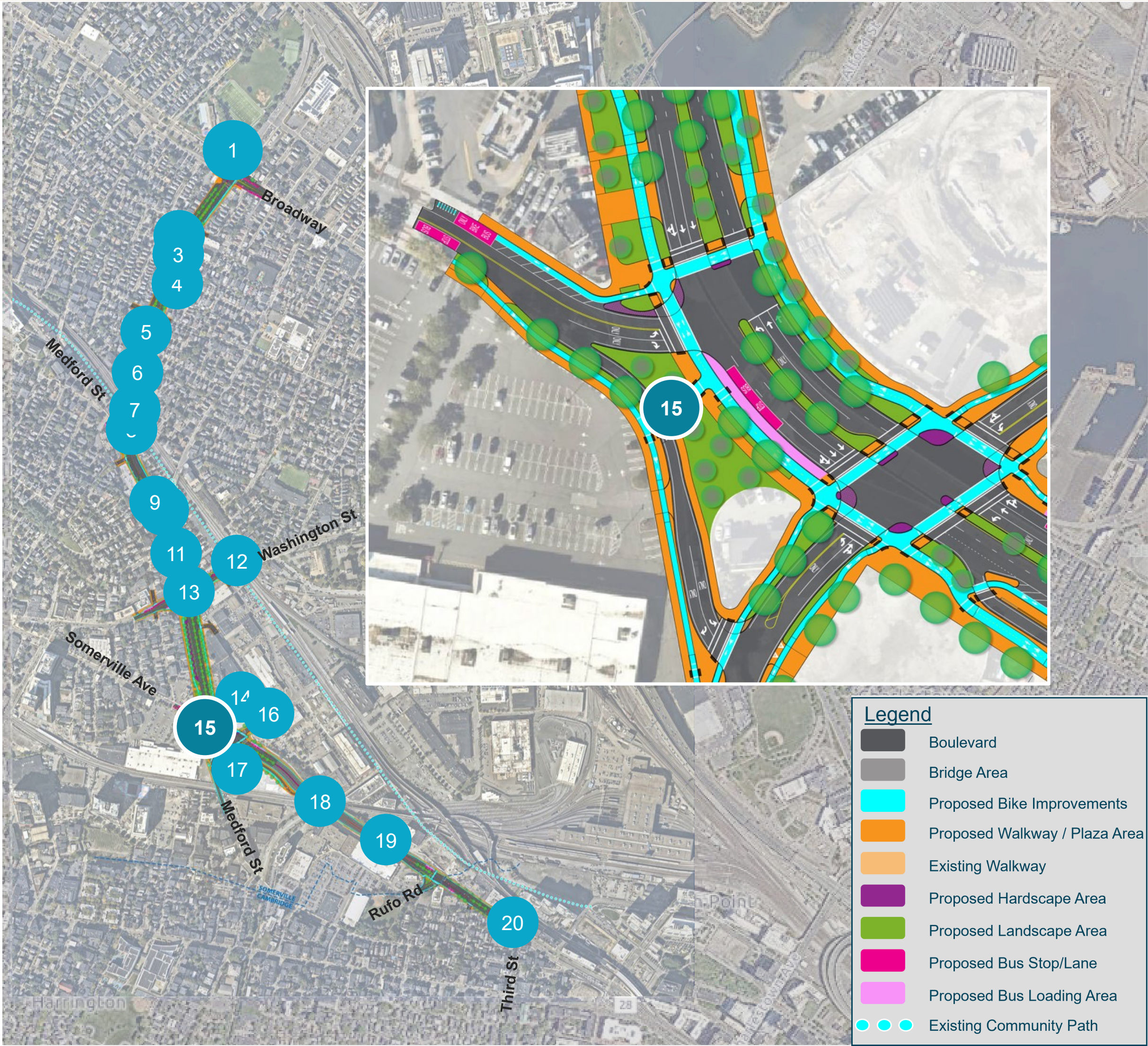


# Multimodal connections to Union Square Station

Bike and pedestrian improvements will facilitate safe connections to the new Union Square Station.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





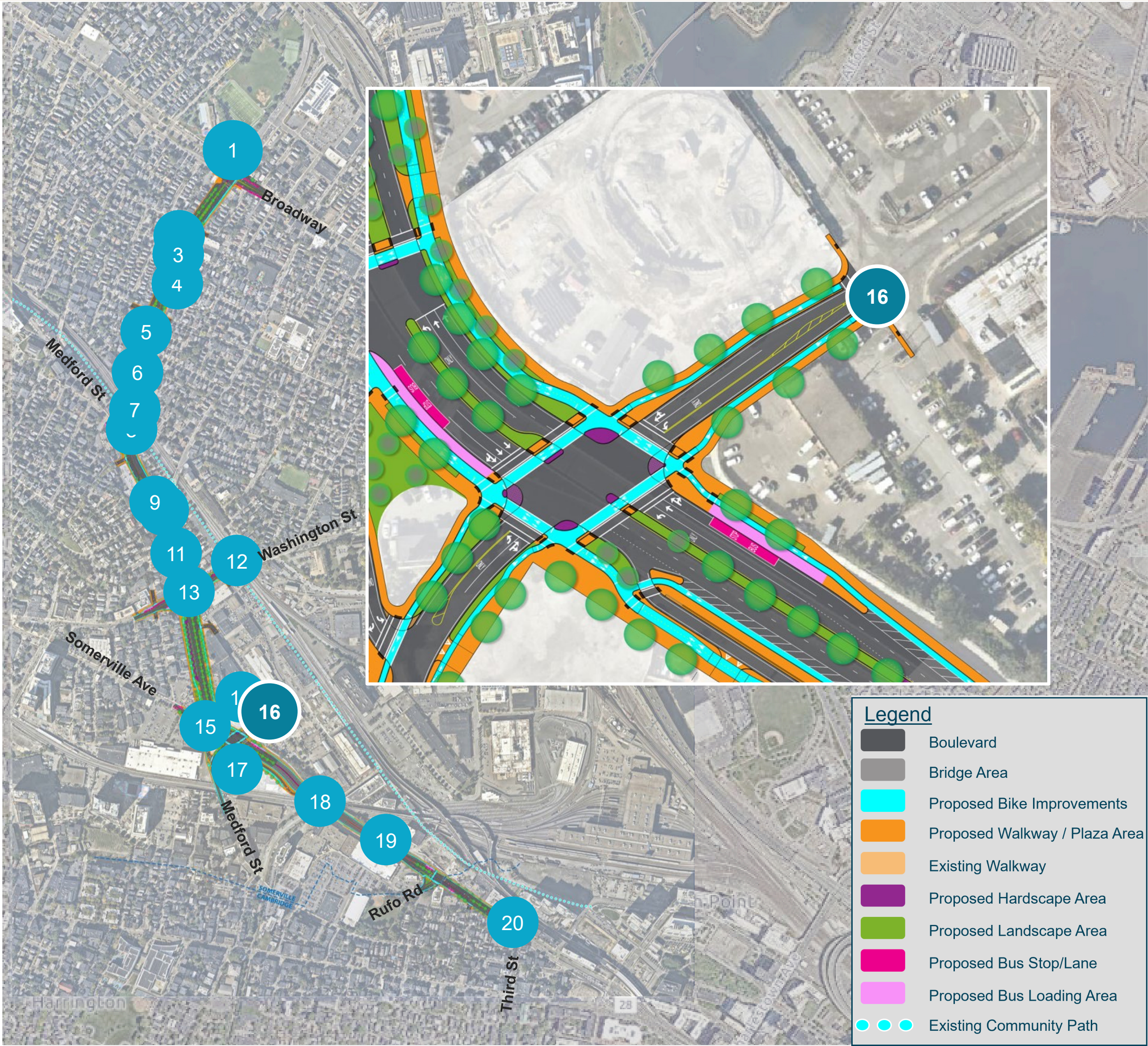
# Removing barriers to Brickbottom

Improvements will enable better walking and biking connections to Brickbottom and potential future development near East Somerville Station.



Image source: Brickbottom Neighborhood Plan Draft (June 2024)

Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





# New and ongoing development

The design of the boulevard will require coordination with development adjacent to the corridor, including 200 McGrath.

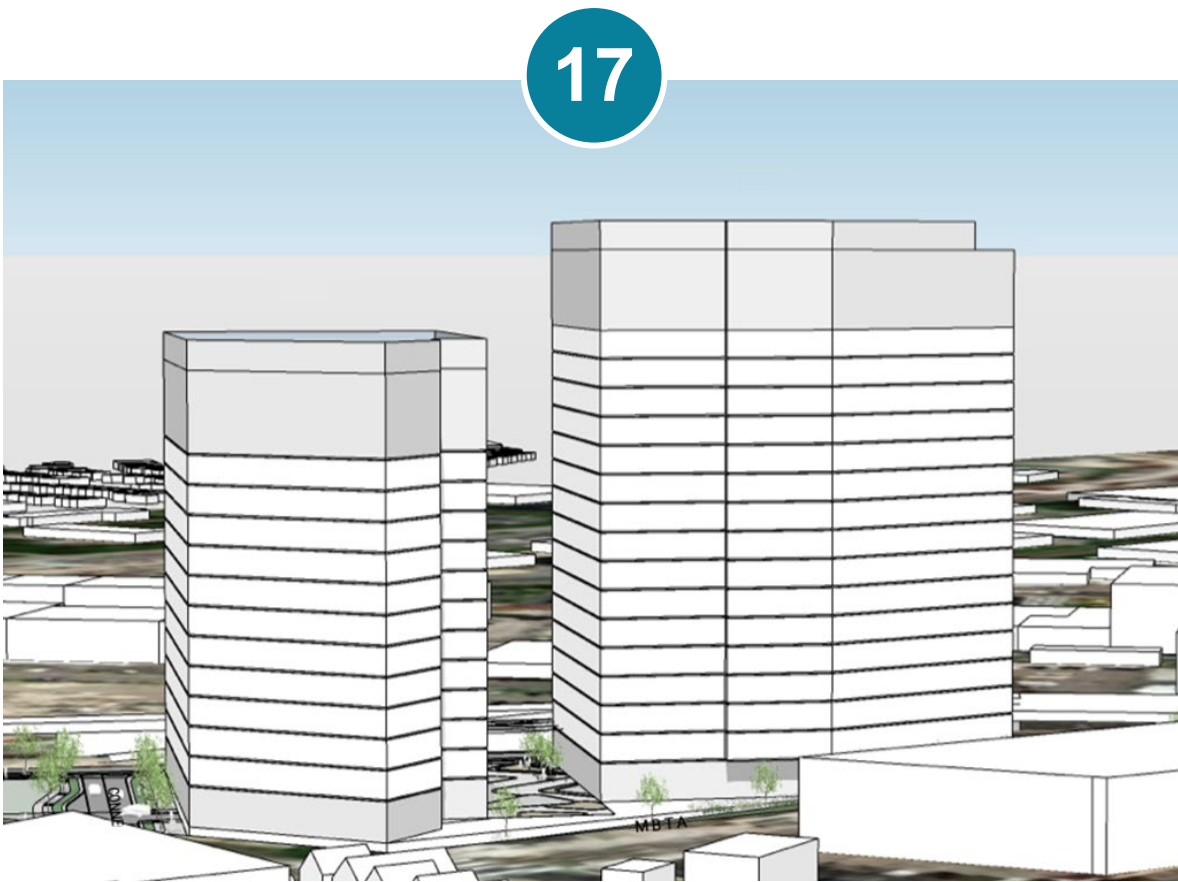


Image source: Stantec, via the Cambridge Day

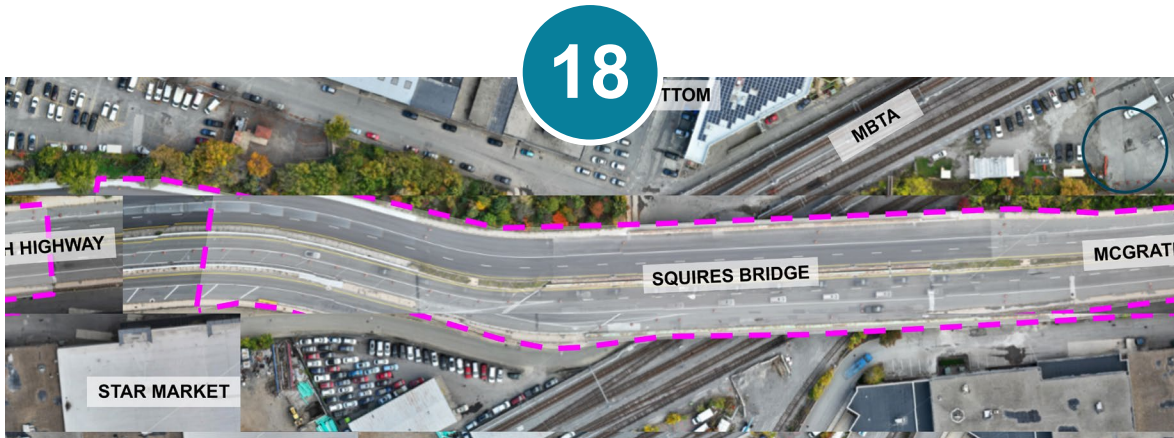
Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.



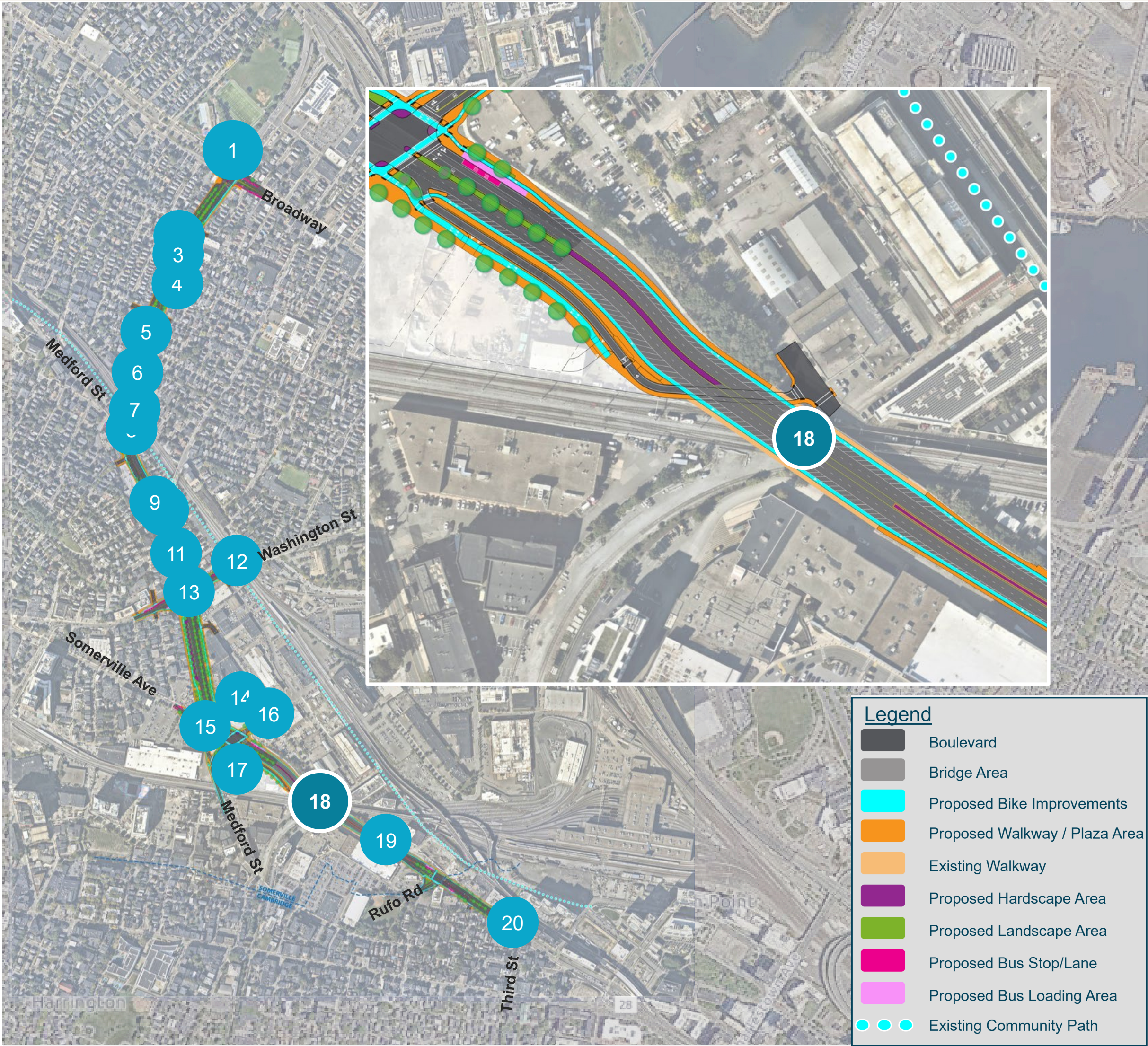


# Coordination with the Squires Bridge Replacement Project

The McGrath Boulevard project will coordinate with MassDOT's Squires Bridge Replacement project (#612634), which is currently at the Project Scoping phase.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.



Legend	
	Boulevard
	Bridge Area
	Proposed Bike Improvements
	Proposed Walkway / Plaza Area
	Existing Walkway
	Proposed Hardscape Area
	Proposed Landscape Area
	Proposed Bus Stop/Lane
	Proposed Bus Loading Area
	Existing Community Path



# One-way separated bike lanes on both sides

One-way bike lanes will be included between Rufo Road and Third Street.



Image source: National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)

Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.



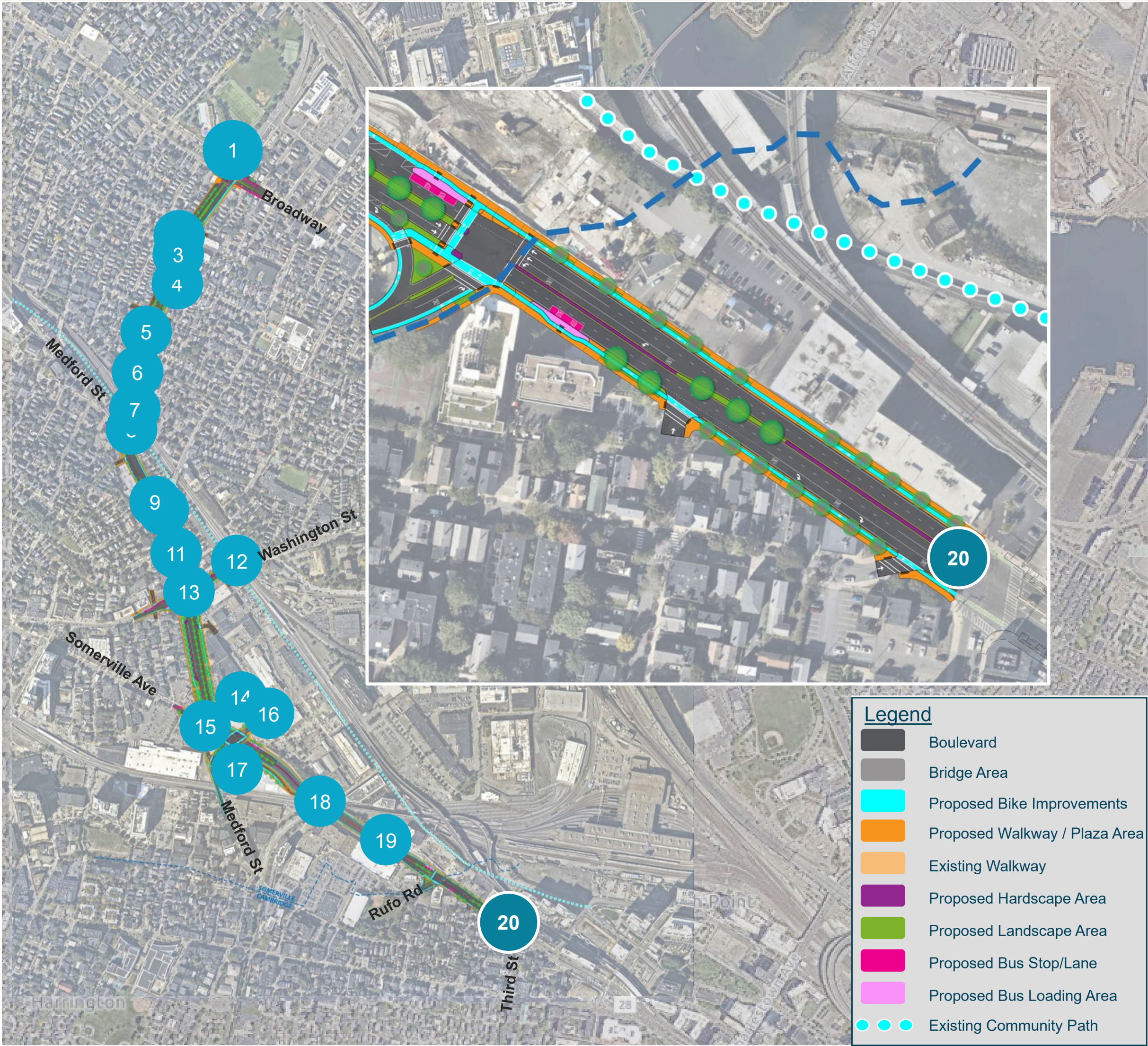


# Connections to Cambridge

The design will connect to existing multimodal facilities in Cambridge, providing access to the new Lechmere Station and the North Point neighborhood.



Note: Map concept shown is preliminary as of February 2024.





# Next steps



Ongoing

**Continue Outreach:**  
Stakeholders,  
Environmental Justice  
neighborhoods,  
Somerville, Cambridge



Summer 2024

**25% Design:** Project  
Coordination, Traffic  
Analysis, RSAs, Plan  
Development, Environmental  
Review, Preliminary ROW



Fall/Winter 2024

**Public Information  
Meeting:** project updates  
and public feedback



Spring 2025

**Design Public Hearing:**  
Present full 25% level  
design



2025-2028

**Final Design:** Complete  
Environmental Review,  
75% Design, 100%  
Design, Complete ROW,  
Prepare Bid Package



Begins 2028

**Construction:**  
Advertisement, Bid  
Review, Select Contractor,  
Notice to Proceed

**Questions or comments?**  
Contact [massdotmajorprojects@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:massdotmajorprojects@dot.state.ma.us)