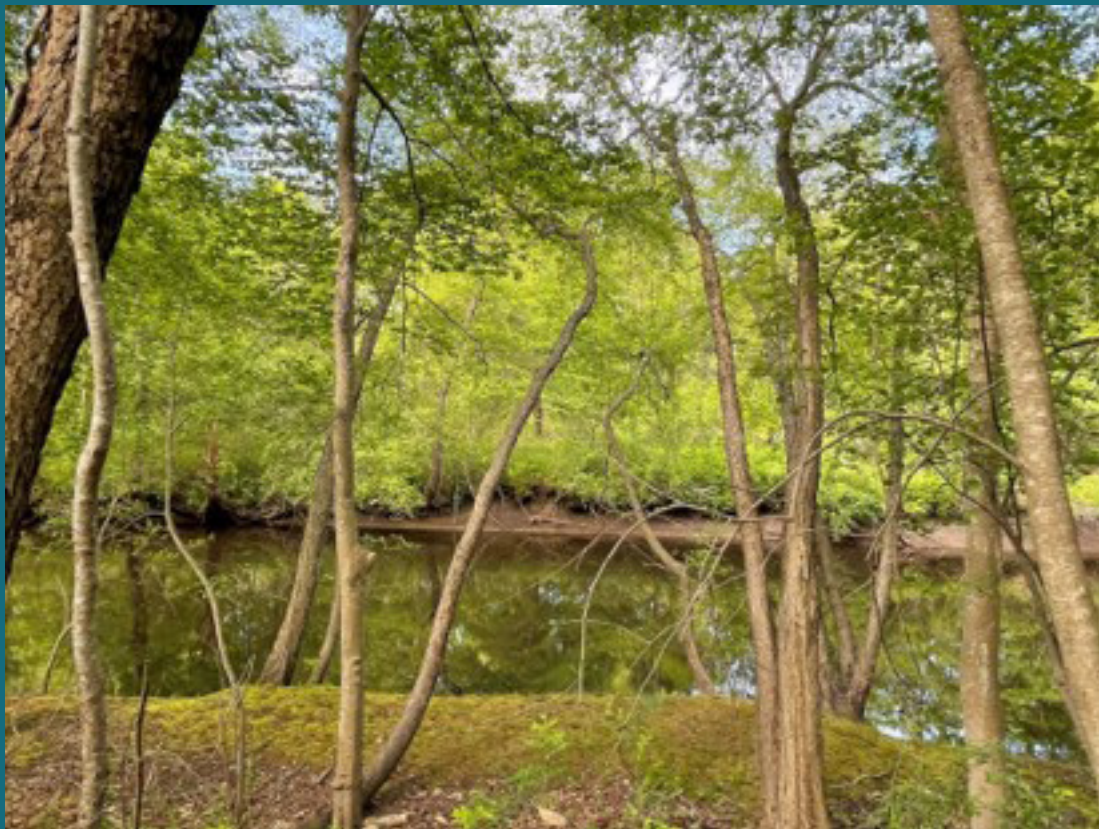


NEPONSET RIVER GREENWAY



March 2024



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



1.1 Introduction

The Neponset River Greenway (NRG) serves as an important local and regional connection and recreational amenity for people in a diverse range of communities adjacent to the Greenway and for many who visit the area. Its continual expansion over the past decade has enabled access to the wealth of DCR and locally owned resources near the trail, improving opportunities for recreation, transportation, and community-connectivity for people traveling on foot and by bike. A significant portion of the NRG in Boston—from Tenen Beach to the intersection of Truman Parkway at Neponset Valley Parkway—is complete. Additional segments are in design, including an extension north from Tenen Beach to Morrissey Boulevard in Dorchester and the Edgewater Greenway in Mattapan. However, several crucial links remain to be planned, designed and constructed to provide off-road trail connections to area open spaces for the residents of Mattapan, Dorchester, Milton, Hyde Park and beyond. Chief among these are the connections to the Blue Hills and the Readville Commuter Rail Station.

In line with the vision laid out in the DCR Parkways Masterplan, this project has the potential to open up an unprecedented level of seamless, high-quality regional connectivity in Boston and towns south for active transportation and recreation. The extension of the NRG will serve as a continuous link between the Old Harbor Reservation, the Blue Hills and Readville Commuter Rail Station creating new recreational opportunities, as well as improved access to thousands of job opportunities in Boston for residents south of the city.

The purpose of this project was to inventory DCR-owned parklands in the project area, other public open space, and roadway rights-of-way to identify and evaluate alternative routes to connect pedestrians and bicyclists from the current terminus of the NRG at Truman Parkway to the Blue Hills. During this process, and with input from the public and stakeholders, an additional

connection was identified from the intersection of Neponset River Parkway and Truman Parkway west to multiple public transit links at the Readville Commuter Rail Station in Wolcott Square. The project included a feasibility study and conceptual designs for a shared use path (SUP) connection in both directions.

The results of this work, which are summarized herein, include a recommended route for a SUP connection from NRG to Blue Hill Avenue (at which point it will meet a future SUP planned by MassDOT to connect to Blue Hills), recommended cross-sections for a potential SUP to the Readville Commuter Rail Station, and many other broad recommendations to support a variety of community connections with DCR parkways and local and regional destinations. The recommended SUP connections are illustrated on the Preferred Plan and were developed to a conceptual-level plan set - see attachments A and B. Anticipated permitting, an implementation strategy and cost estimates have also been developed for the shared use paths.

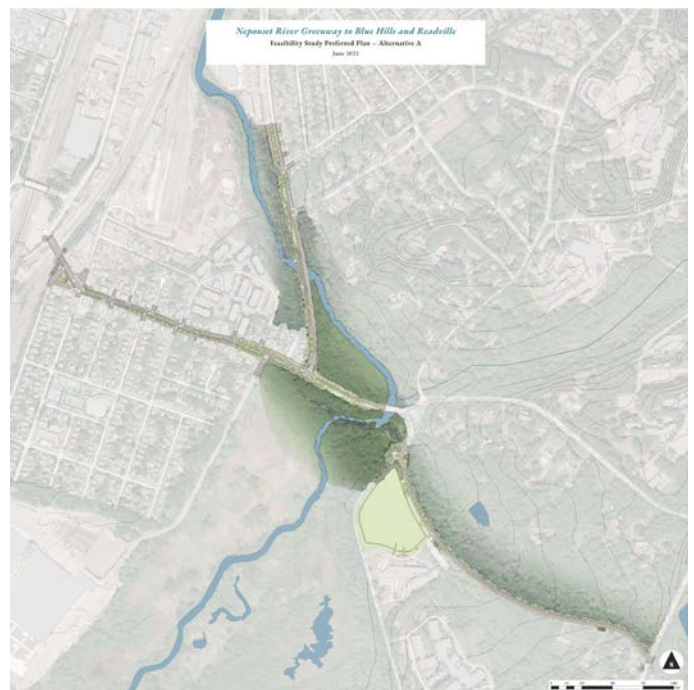


Figure 1: Preferred Plan

1.2 Project Goals and Study Overview

A Shared Vision

The feasibility study for a trail connection between the Neponset River Greenway (NRG) and the Blue Hills Reservation first and foremost upholds **Department of Conservation and Recreation's Mission**:

To protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well-being of all.

Although there are many aspirations for the trail connection, a comprehensive **Project Goal** was developed to guide the study:

Identify and evaluate alternative routes for greater community connections, resulting in a preferred shared-use path alignment connecting between the Neponset River Greenway's southern end at Truman Parkway to the Blue Hills Trailside Museum.

These were the basis of agreed-upon **Objectives** developed with the DCR:

- Enhanced community connectivity
- Improved access to recreation and healthy living for all
- Safety and convenience
- Preservation of natural resources
- Protection of historic and archaeological areas
- Climate resiliency
- Straightforward implementation and maintenance

The following discussion will elaborate on how this Vision guided the identification of the preferred shared-use path that will connect the southern end of the Neponset River Greenway to the Blue Hills Reservation Trailside Museum.

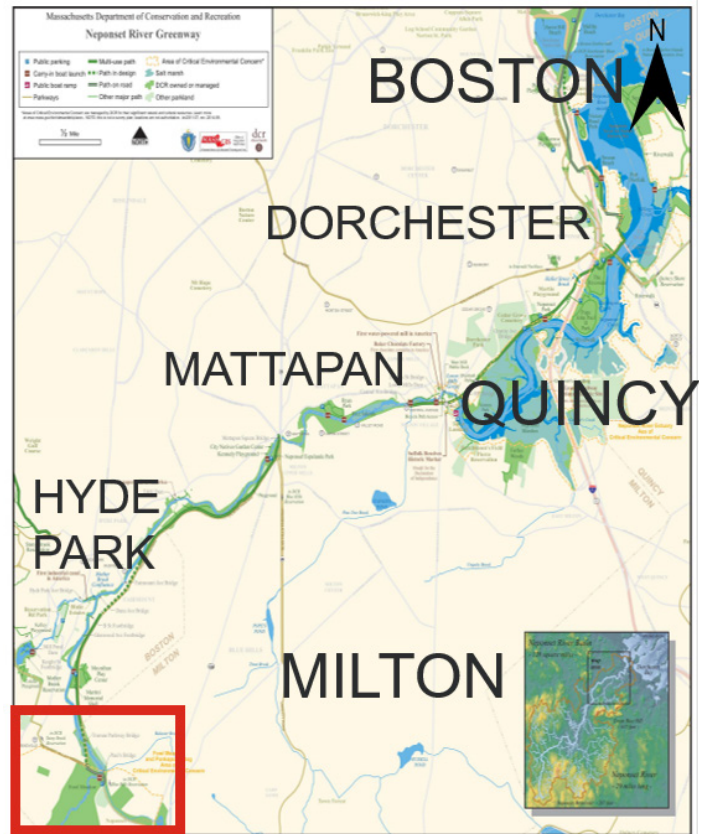


Figure 2: DCR Neponset River Greenway Map

Project Location

The project is located near the southern end of the Neponset River Greenway. The DCR NRG Map above shows the existing greenway from Boston south to Milton, and the red square indicates the general project location.

The Project Area map indicates with red stars the northern extent of the Project Area at the Boston / Milton line on Truman Parkway and the Blue Hills Trailside Museum.

The Project Area is shown as a dashed orange line, the existing Neponset River Greenway as a dotted green line, and the DCR owned land and Open Spaces are indicated by the green areas. The dashed yellow line indicates the Fowl Meadow ACEC which will be discussed in more detail later.

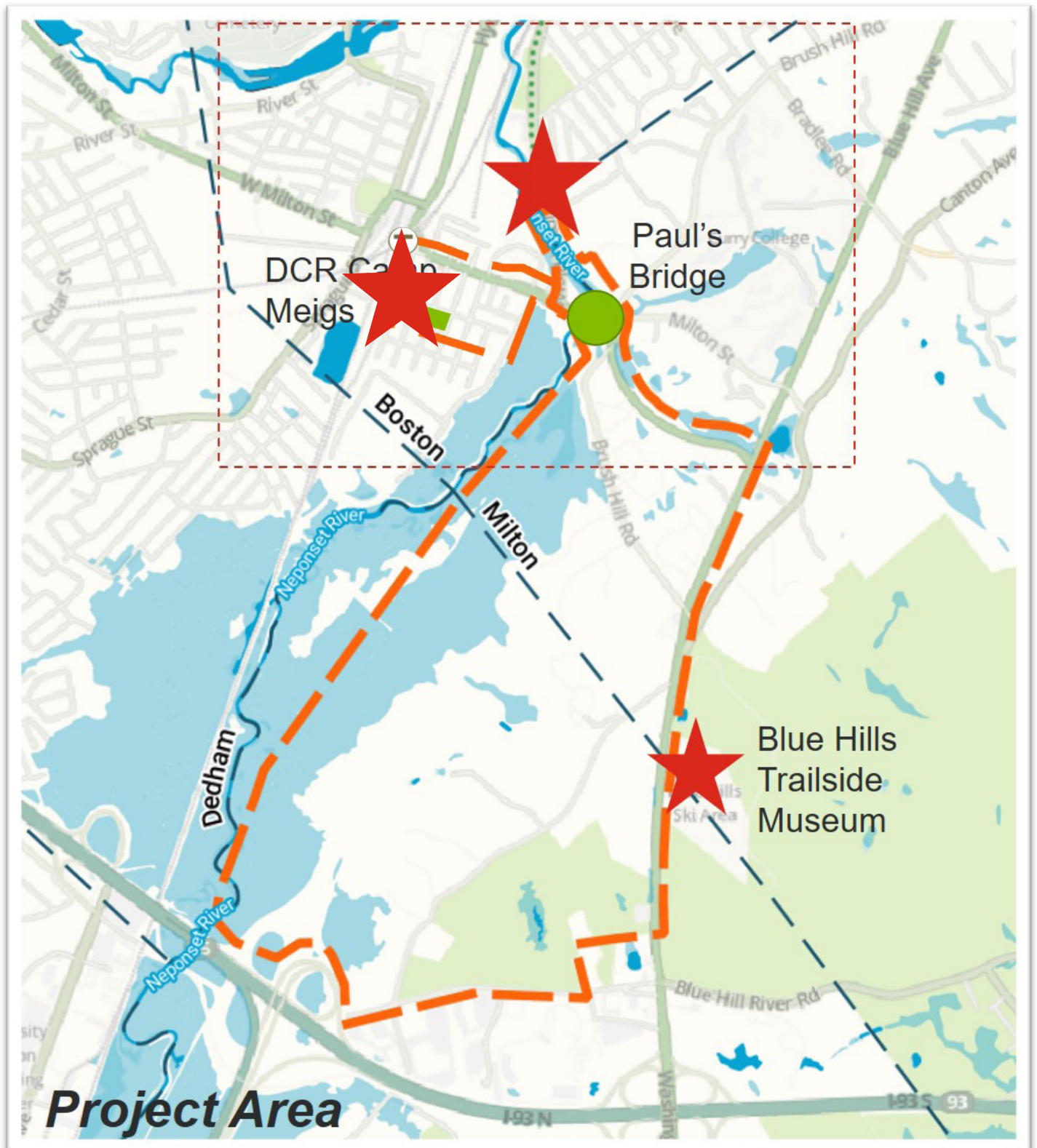


Figure 3: Project Area

Connecting to Readville Commuter Rail Station

The goal of this portion of work is to identify a preferred route for a shared-use path alignment connecting between the Neponset River Greenway's southern end at Truman Parkway to Readville Commuter Rail Station. Community connections will be used along to Neponset Valley Parkway allow safe and clear access to Camp Meigs and other local destinations.

The Study Area map indicates with red stars the eastern extent of the project area at intersection of Neponset Valley Parkway and Truman Parkway, Readville Station, and Camp Meigs.

Shared Use Path

The Project Goal identifies that the Feasibility Study will result in the identification of preferred shared-use path. The term "shared use path" is generally understood as a non-motorized path that is independently aligned from a roadway.

It can accommodate a variety of users including walkers, bicyclists, joggers, people with disabilities, skaters, and pets. These users can be on the path for a variety of reasons including recreation, commuting, and local travel.

The image on the following page is an example of a shared use path.

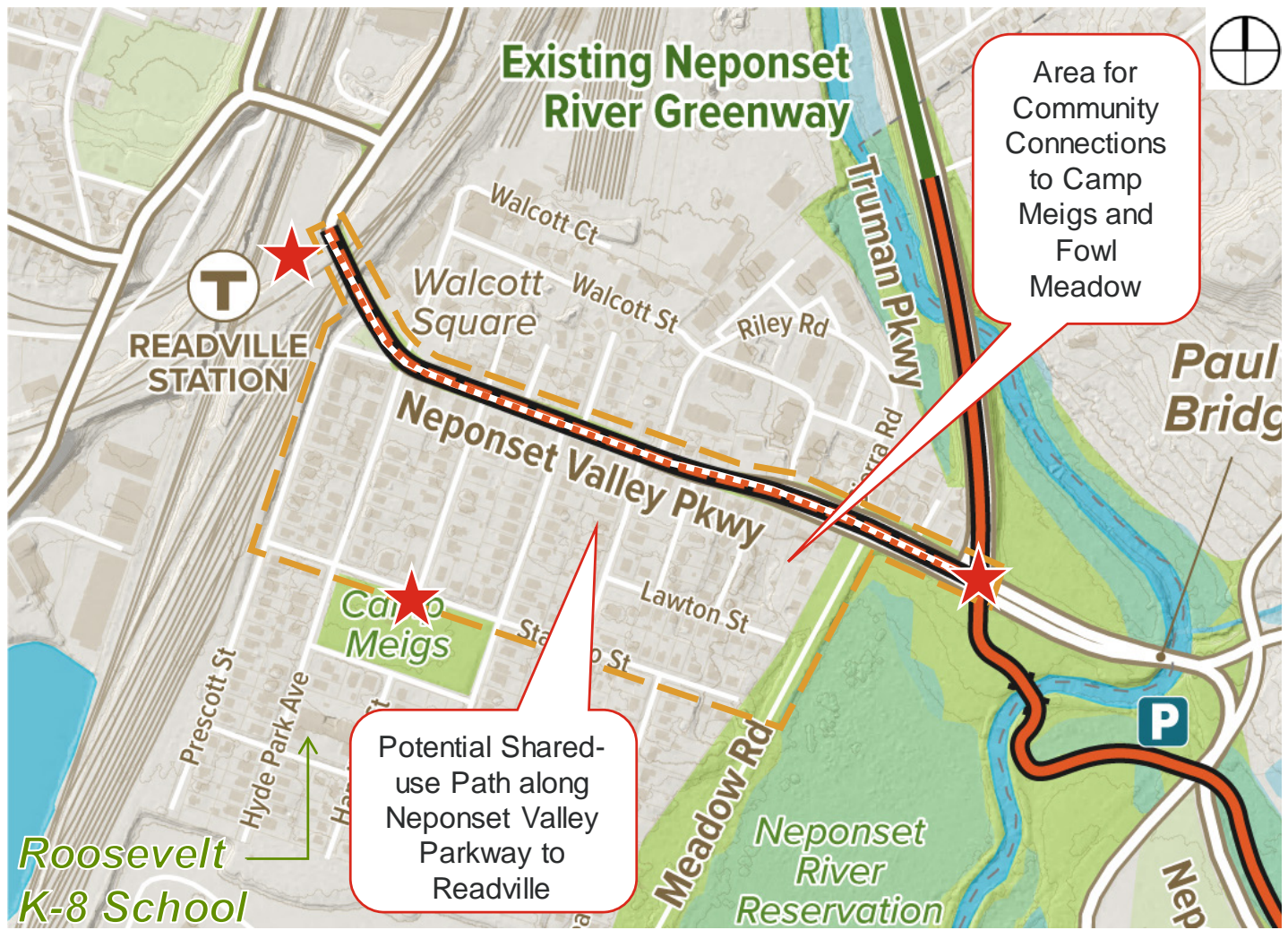


Figure 4: Neponset River Greenway to Readville: Study Area

The Project Goal also emphasizes the importance of this project to identify other opportunities for community connections. This was considered throughout the development of the Feasibility Study. The photos on the right show two of the many community destinations in the project area: the Blue Hills Reservation Trailside Museum and interesting artifacts of the area's history such as the remnants of a highway that didn't get built due to the successful effort of the public to preserve the sensitive environmental of Fowl Meadow and the ACEC. More discussion on community destinations will follow.

Public Engagement

Public input was critical to the development of the feasibility study and the preferred plan. Engagement efforts were held throughout the process in different formats to allow community members and stakeholders to give input and hear about the progress in a manner that worked for them.

Meeting #1

The initial input meeting was held virtually to introduce the project and gather initial feedback on what the public wished to see in the future trail connection between the Neponset River Greenway and Blue Hills Reservation. At this meeting, a public survey was also launched to gather feedback from those who could not attend the meeting. Very few people participated in the survey and, while that input was considered, the results were not statistically significant and are not included herein.

Meeting #2

The second public meeting, also held virtually, covered the feasibility study process and alternative alignment matrix. The matrix included evaluation criteria based on the project objectives. Proposed cross-sections were included to help aid the discussion of the preferred alignment.



Photo: Illustrative example of a shared-use path



Photo: Blue Hills Reservation Trailside Museum

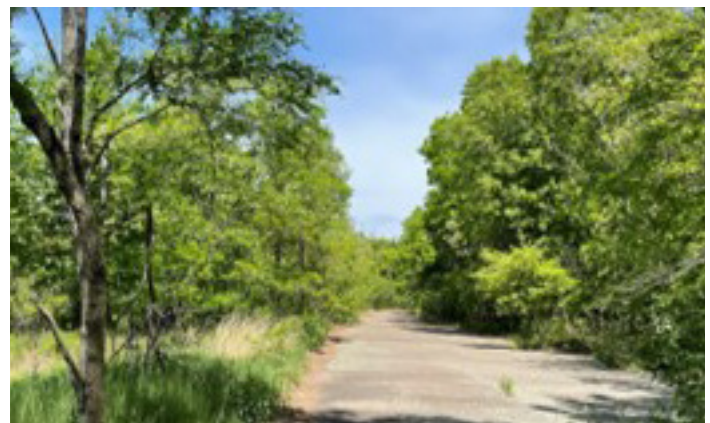


Photo: Remnants of the highway that wasn't built

Meeting #3

A site walk was held to give communities members a chance to view the preferred trail alignment in person with the project team to answer any questions.

Meeting #4

The next public meeting was an open house to reveal the recommended preferred plan for the SUP. Stations were setup to show different segments and allow community members to ask specific questions and give pointed feedback to the project team.

Meeting #5

The final public meeting was a site walk focusing on the Neponset Valley Parkway at Brush Hill Road intersection followed by an informal Q and A session.



Photo: Public site walk

Shared-use Path Design Standards:

- Two-way travel
- Meets accessibility guidelines, paved
- 12'-16' wide *
- 2'-3' clear shoulders
- 10' min. overhead clearance

Figure 5: Design standards

Basis of Design/Guidelines

As an extension of the existing shared use path, certain elements of design were replicated along the new extension to maintain a consistent look and feel of the Neponset River Greenway, such as asphalt paving and aesthetic wood guardrails. At a minimum, the preferred path must meet applicable design standards for accessibility and safety. The basic shared-use path design standards used for evaluation were developed based on DCR standards, the 2012 AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities and the MassDOT Shared Use Path recommended dimensions and knowledge gleaned from similar paths in the Boston area. The dimensional requirements will be further refined in future project phases. The standards used at this phase of the project include:

Path width - Based AASHTO guidelines the preferred path width for a 2-way shared use path is 12-14', with a minimum of 11' recommended where a separate pedestrian facility (sidewalk) is provided.

Buffers - A landscaped street buffer does not only increase safety for users, but is also critical to maintaining a park-like feeling through an urban environment. A preferred buffer width of 10' wherever possible will allow for shade trees to be planted and thrive, as well as providing room for green stormwater infrastructure.

Trail signage - Given the proximity of the trail to historic landmarks and popular destinations, wayfinding signage was deemed to be a must-have by both the project team and the community members. Signage will not only guide trail users to locations such as Camp Meigs, Fowl Meadow, and the Blue Hills Trailside Museum, but it will also narrate the historic and ecological significance of these areas.