5
Mobility and Access

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Vision for Mobility

The Action Plan seeks to improve mobility and create a safe, welcoming, and accessible path system for people of all ages and abilities. The path system supports both recreational and commuting use. To this end, the path system should:

- Include a primary north-south shared use path that is wide enough to support safe travel and recreation by high volumes of people walking and rolling;
- Provide a network of secondary paths that allow visitors to seamlessly connect between the primary path, park facilities, neighborhood side streets, bike lanes and bus routes, and T station entries;
- Provide safe, comfortable, and intuitive crossings that comply with current accessibility laws and support high user volumes;
- Incorporate surface treatments and signage that clarify path use and amenities – seating, bike parking, etc – that enhance experience and connection to adjacent spaces.

Recommendations for achieving these goals are detailed throughout this chapter.

Primary Shared Use Path

Single Path

Where a single asphalt path runs north-south through parkland today (the path currently signed for bicyclists), that path should be widened and designated for shared use by people walking and biking. This will reflects today's use, as pedestrians frequently use the bike path in the park rather than follow signage that points them to narrow sidewalks with less shade and close proximity to cars. Signs that guide pedestrians toward City-owned sidewalks should be removed, except at Northeastern University and in the South End (see page 127).

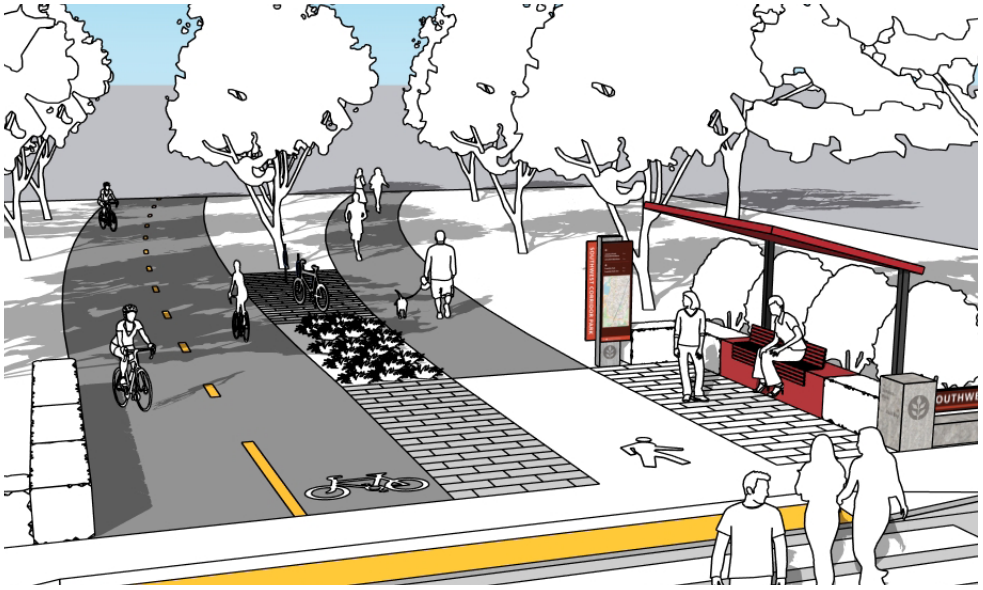
Parallel Paths

Where parallel (or dual) asphalt paths exist in parkland today, both paths should be retained, and the priority use for each path – pedestrian or bicyclist – should continue to be signed and/or marked. Fundamentally, the paths are and will remain shared use, as neither has detectable queues that indicate which route to follow for people with low vision. However, the encouraged separation helps provide more comfortable spaces for slower and faster users. Modifications are recommended:

- The path signed for bicyclists should be widened throughout. See broad width recommendations in the next section and block-by-block recommendations in the maps starting on page 135;
- In select locations, the dual paths should be combined into a single asphalt path. See the maps starting on page 135 for these locations.

See *Materials* on page 133 for recommendations on how to make the different paths and uses legible.

Shared use paths will be widened to 11' or more



Where parallel paths exist today, those will be retained but with the bike path widened to a minimum of 11 feet

Width

To support safer use, widen all single shared use paths and paths prioritized for bicyclists, to at least 11 feet. This is the minimum width needed to support individuals moving in both directions with passing space in between. Aim for 12 - 13 feet where feasible, and up to 15 feet near Jackson Square, to better support high volume use. Move granite blocks and lights to accommodate widening.

Path Width and Trees

Preserving trees is a priority for shade and health benefits. However, existing trees often limit path widening to 11' or slightly lower in spot locations. During design, take advantage of canopy gaps to achieve 12 - 13 feet, and plant new trees further from the path.

Northeastern University

The Northeastern University segment runs north from Ruggles T station to Camden Street. This segment has recently been modified by the university and City and is unique in character. It includes a two-way bike lane next to the university fence on the west side of Columbus Avenue and one-way parking protected bike lanes on both sides of the roadway. Pedestrians following the corridor use a wide sidewalk adjacent to the road and separated from the two-way bike lane by a treeway. The only action recommended for this segment is to provide signage that clarifies users are still on the corridor.

South End

Today, the corridor route that runs through the South End (Massachusetts Avenue to Dartmouth Street) includes what appears as concrete sidewalk that often parallels a narrow roadway. A higher percentage of pedestrians use the path than bicyclists in this area, and shared use frequently causes frustration

The Northeastern area includes a raised two-way bike lane and wide sidewalk area, and one-way protected bike lanes in the road

between the user groups. The curving design through lush planting and granite walls is pleasant for pedestrians but narrow and confusing for bicyclists. It is also difficult for bicyclists to access the adjacent roadway. To clarify and ease corridor travel in this segment, the following is recommended:

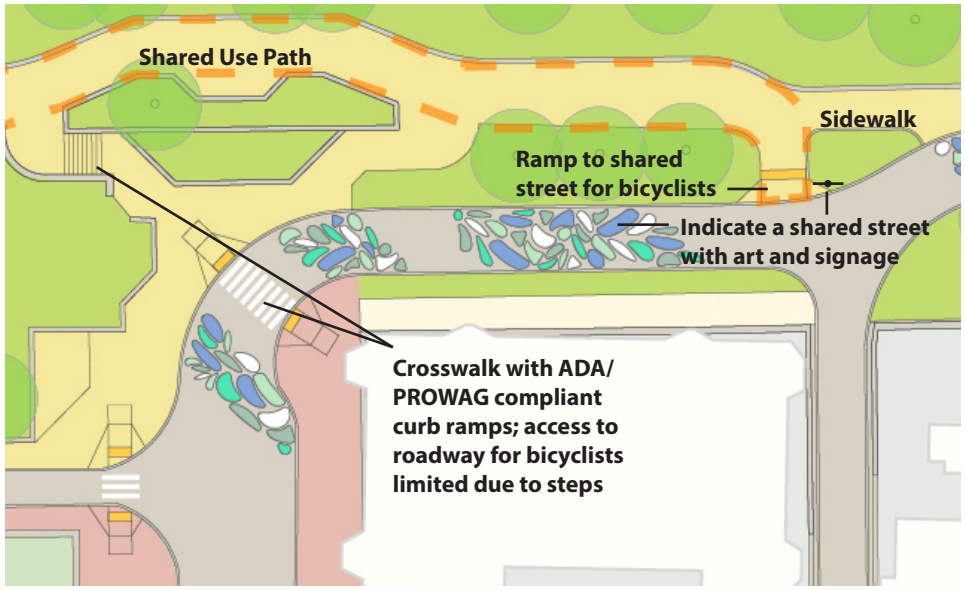
- Where only a single concrete or brick path exists, this should be widened, ideally to 12 - 13' but at least to 11 feet, to serve as a shared use path. Reshape planter boxes to accommodate widening, and indicate that the path is shared.
- Where the path parallels the roadway, a shared street is recommended. This would be open to all, including people walking, biking, and driving, but use is mostly expected by people biking and driving. One-way westbound travel would be maintained for drivers, while people walking and biking could be expected in both directions. Design for a shared street is detailed on the next page.

Primary Path (continued)

Shared Street Design

To ensure a safe, comfortable, and accessible environment for all roadway users on a shared street, the following elements are recommended:

- Curb ramps should be reconstructed to meet ADA/ PROWAG. Crosswalks connecting the ramps are recommended to be repainted to enhance visibility of people crossing.
- Ramps are recommended at the western and eastern ends of Claremont and Carleton Streets to facilitate bicyclists' access to/from the shared street. Detectable warnings should be placed at the top rather than bottom where ramps are meant primarily for bicyclists and not integrated with crosswalks.
- Street art is recommended to be incorporated on the pavement of the shared street to encourage slower vehicle speeds and visually signal that the street is shared among all users.
- Signage to denote the new shared street configuration should be posted on all approaches to the shared street to notify all users.
- Traffic calming in the form of speed humps or raised crosswalks, as appropriate, are recommended on all streets that connect the shared street to Columbus Ave as a way to encourage slower vehicle speeds entering the shared space, particularly around the sharp curves.



The single shared path will transition to a sidewalk + shared street along Claremont and Carleton Streets

Community-created street art will help designate the street as a slow, shared space (credit: Somerville Neighborways)

Secondary Paths

While the primary paths facilitate north-south travel through the park, secondary paths connect people from the primary path to side streets and other park facilities. Secondary paths can also be used to simply enjoy the park at a slower speed and include the pedestrian paths that parallel the primary shared use path. Today, secondary paths are a mix of paved paths and unpaved social paths (or desire lines) where the grass is worn from use. Secondary paths will be (re) developed as recreation and garden spaces are modified according to recommendations in section 6.

- New and existing paths should be firm, stable, and slip-resistant and follow ADA guidelines for cross slopes.
- Where secondary paths join the primary path, the likelihood of user conflicts is heightened. Raise awareness of potential cross traffic via change in path material, pavement markings, and/or signage as appropriate.

Secondary paths connect people to park destinations and side streets

Network Connections

The corridor plays a key role in helping people reach businesses, institutions, and other spaces outside the park. It is important to enhance connectivity to T station entries, sidewalks, and bike lanes, which requires coordination between DCR, the MBTA, and the City of Boston. It is recommended to:

- Modify T station plazas to designate space for the primary path. Provide adequate bike parking and designated, easy-to-access space for bikeshare. The City, MBTA, and DCR are already coordinating on plaza upgrades at Massachusetts Avenue and Roxbury Crossing stations at the time of writing.
- Provide additional entries from adjacent side streets where appropriate. See maps starting on page 135.

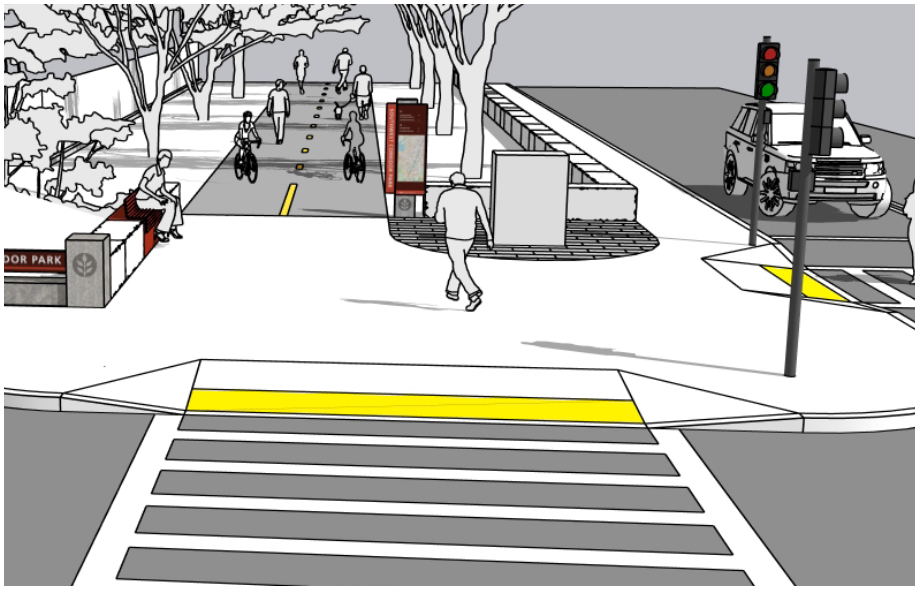
Coordinate with the MBTA and City to better integrate paths with transit entries and Bluebike stations

Street Crossings and Accessibility

Street crossings are prevalent throughout the corridor and are located midblock and at unsignalized and signalized intersections under City of Boston jurisdiction. Many street crossings require improvements to address narrow curb ramps, rough pavement conditions, low visibility, and other issues.

As crossing modifications are ultimately the responsibility of the City, this action plan encourages continued coordination between DCR and the City to improve both crossings and adjacent park entries/path approaches to crossings. Entry improvements are addressed in Section 4. Broad recommendations for crossings are listed below. The City has already programmed some of these recommendations into current projects as noted in Early Action Items.

- Bring curb ramps up to ADA/PROWAG compliance, and widen curb ramps and roadway markings to better accommodate high user volumes and shared use. Curb ramps must support turning to/from bike lanes on city streets, so consider placement of vertical features in design
- Implement raised crossings as feasible to prioritize the primary path route and reduce transitions for people walking and rolling
- Move granite blocks, concrete walls, light poles, signage, and/or signal equipment as feasible to remove width constraints and provide more queuing space. Remove and replant trees where appropriate to create safer, more open entry areas for the long-term
- Improve pavement conditions on the sidewalk and roadway as necessary for smooth and stable surfaces
- Reduce steep slopes on select approaches to ramps (see map on page 144) to the maximum extent feasible
- Increase visibility of path crossings via signage, pavement markings, and vertical features where needed. For instance, consider providing greater distance between stop bars and crosswalks than the standard 5 feet, and employ a range of measures to raise awareness between drivers and bicyclists at New Minton Street (see map on page 142)
- Tighten curb radii at intersections, realign crossings, and/or provide new crossings from side streets where appropriate over the long-term
- Ensure crossings are adequately lit



Widen curb ramps, and bring up to ADA/PROWAG compliance

Implement raised crossings where feasible

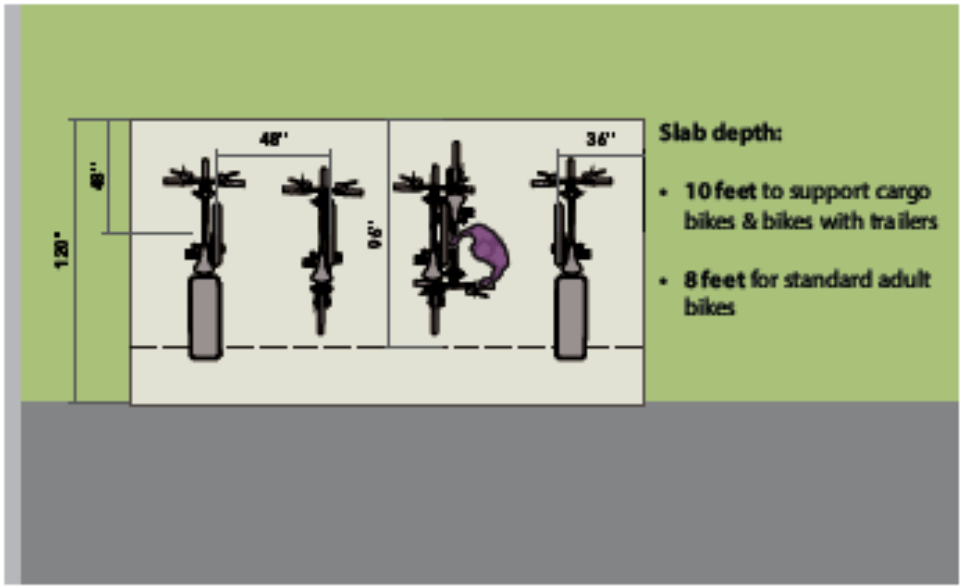
Reduce steep slopes as feasible given utility constraints

Move equipment and granite blocks as feasible to open up space for queuing at crossings

Bike Parking

As part of corridor mobility, it is important to support both pedestrians and cyclists with amenities that make walking and biking comfortable and better integrated with park recreation facilities. Other sections of this action plan speak to site furniture, such as seating, for pedestrians. Below are some additional considerations particularly for people on bikes:

- Provide easy-to-see bike parking near all recreational facilities. One parking area with multiple racks may serve clustered courts and play spaces.
- Upgrade existing sub-standard bike racks. Wave racks should be replaced with either inverted U-racks or post and ring racks where needed.
- Size some bike parking areas, particularly those near playgrounds, to accommodate longer cargo bikes or bikes with trailers. See graphic at right.
- Use bike racks that provide two points of contact above center of gravity of bike frame.
- Consider coordinating with MBTA, City of Boston, and/or other land managers to provide and maintain bike repair and pump stands to allow bicyclists to complete maintenance tasks. A pump stand already exists at Forest Hills T station. Additional stands are recommended near Roxbury Crossing and either Massachusetts Ave or Back Bay T stations.



Provide adequate space for bike parking per the dimensions shown

Materials

Within this mobility section materials recommendations are limited to surfaces, markings, and signage that separate path spaces and signal expected path use. Other chapters of this Action Plan detail a full sign family plus an array of furnishing materials that support park character and entry design.

Surfaces

- The primary north-south paths are recommended to be asphalt from Forest Hills to Massachusetts Avenue station and concrete in the South End, which requires replacing bricks.
- Where parallel paths exist, extend asphalt up to the back of sidewalk for the shared use path, and extend concrete from the sidewalk area into the pedestrian path entry
- Use pavers sparingly at park entries to signal pedestrian space or potential conflict zones. See section 4 for examples of potential use
- Either asphalt or concrete may be applied to secondary paths in keeping with existing character or planned modifications

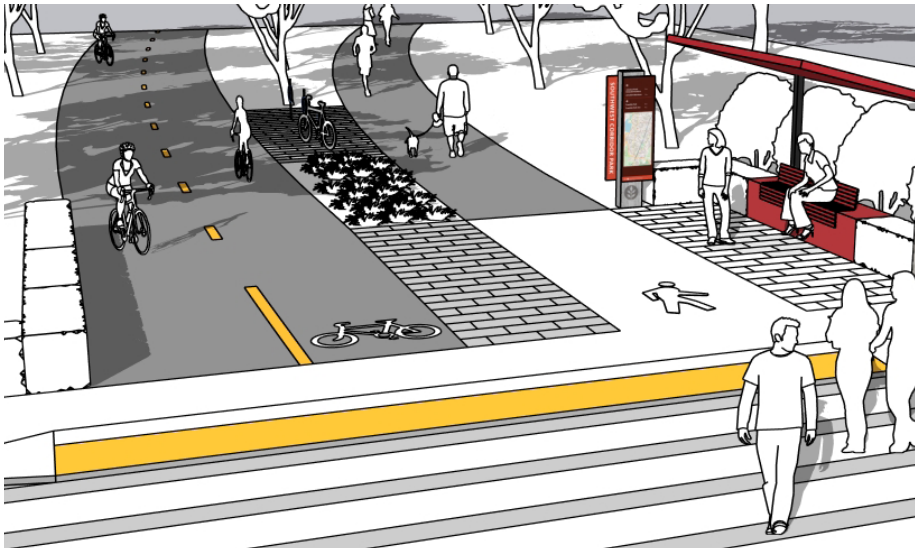
Markings

- Implement a yellow center line on the shared use path and path prioritized for bicyclists where dual paths exist. The center line should typically be dashed to allow passing, but use solid lines at intersection approaches
- Where parallel paths exist, apply use symbols to differentiate paths per the graphic at right. Match markings with user signage.
- Widen crossing markings for the shared use path. Markings will be determined in design but, at the time of writing, are likely to be wide white markings for both pedestrians and cyclists

Signage

In general, signage should only be installed where necessary to minimize visual clutter.

- Provide user signs to indicate path use at select locations (see maps starting on page 135).
- Install regulatory, warning, or etiquette signs as deemed necessary during design or in response to observed safety issues



Surface treatments and markings will help differentiate paths

Path Etiquette

Pilot Strategies

Setting, updating, and clarifying policies and rules is a next phase task but will be informed by the action plan process, as DCR is piloting potential strategies to address a few common issues:

- Observed high speeds by a range of users on wheeled devices
- Path use by people operating prohibited vehicles, particularly gas-powered mopeds
- Perceived conflicts between users trying to pass others along the primary constrained-width path

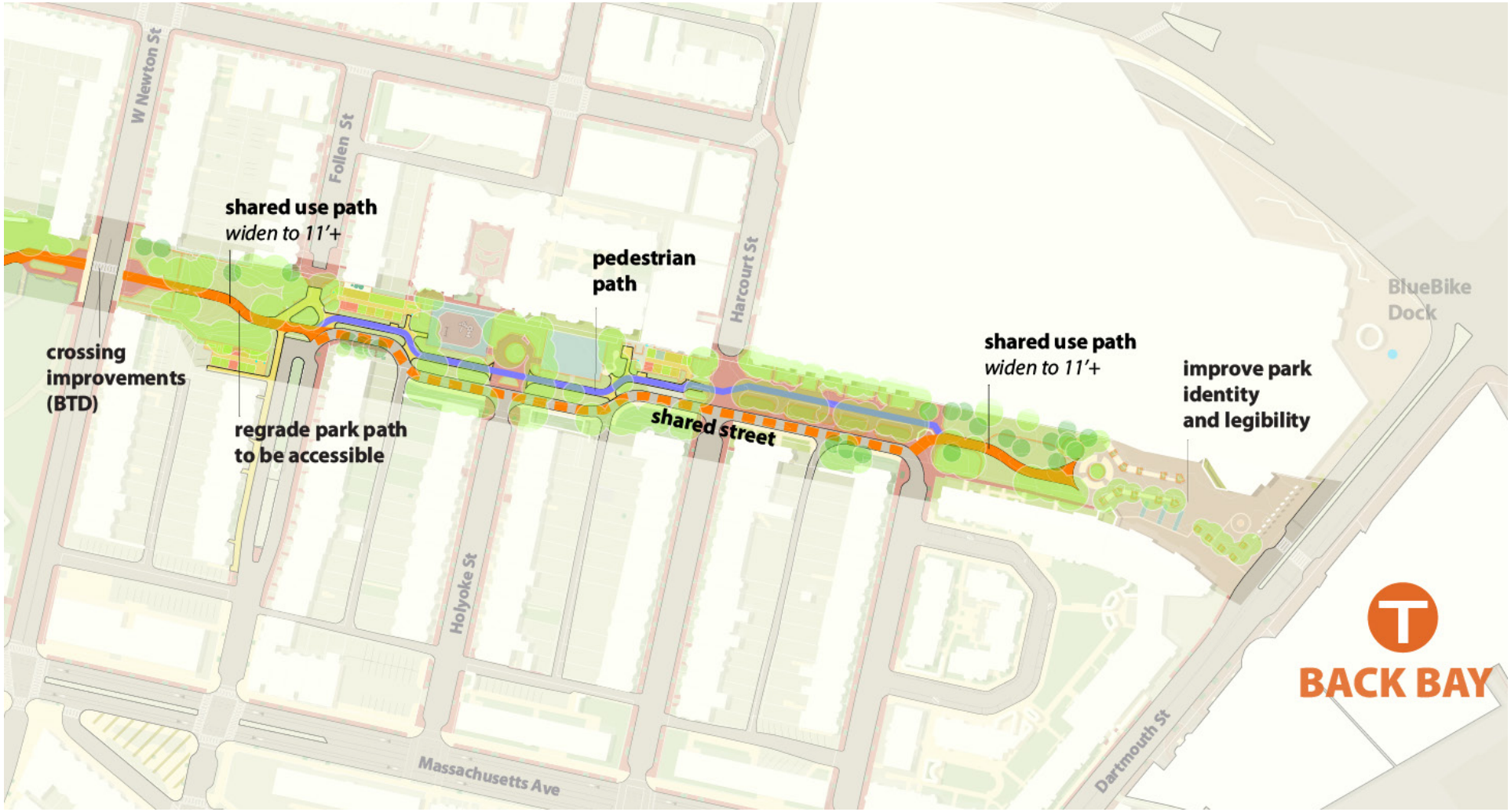
Pilot programs for striping and signage with observations of before and after effects are being pursued by DCR in partnership with MassDOT at the time of writing.

A feedback sign pilot is being evaluated to help slow speeds and potentially establish a speed limit for the corridor

"Mopeds prohibited" pavement markings are being evaluated for whether they successfully encourage moped operators to use the roadway instead of the path

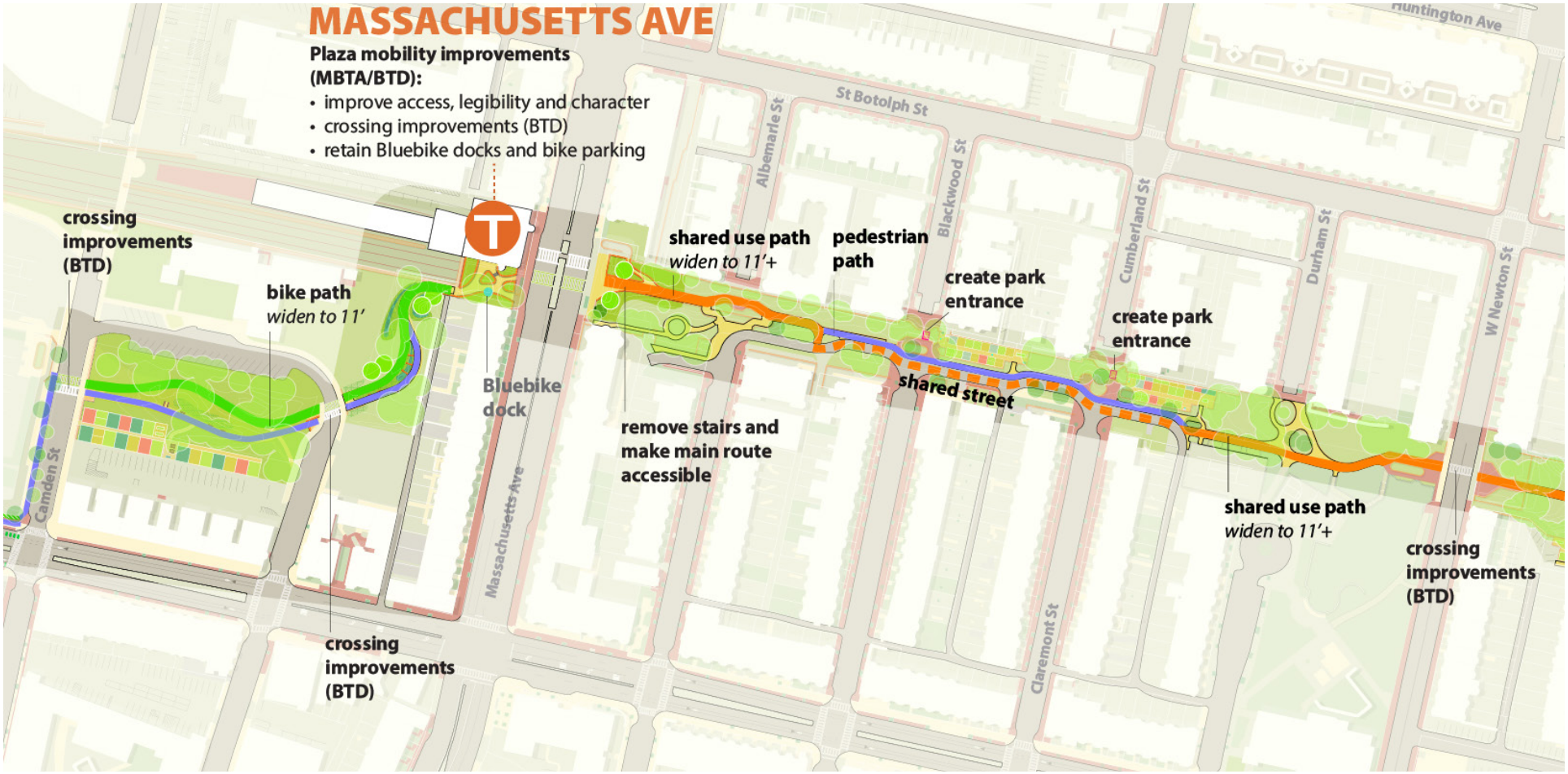
Mobility Recommendations by Segment: West Newton to Dartmouth

The northern terminus of the Southwest Corridor Park will have a greater identity and legibility signifying the entrance to the park. Carleton Street will be redesigned as a shared street to allow use by all modes.



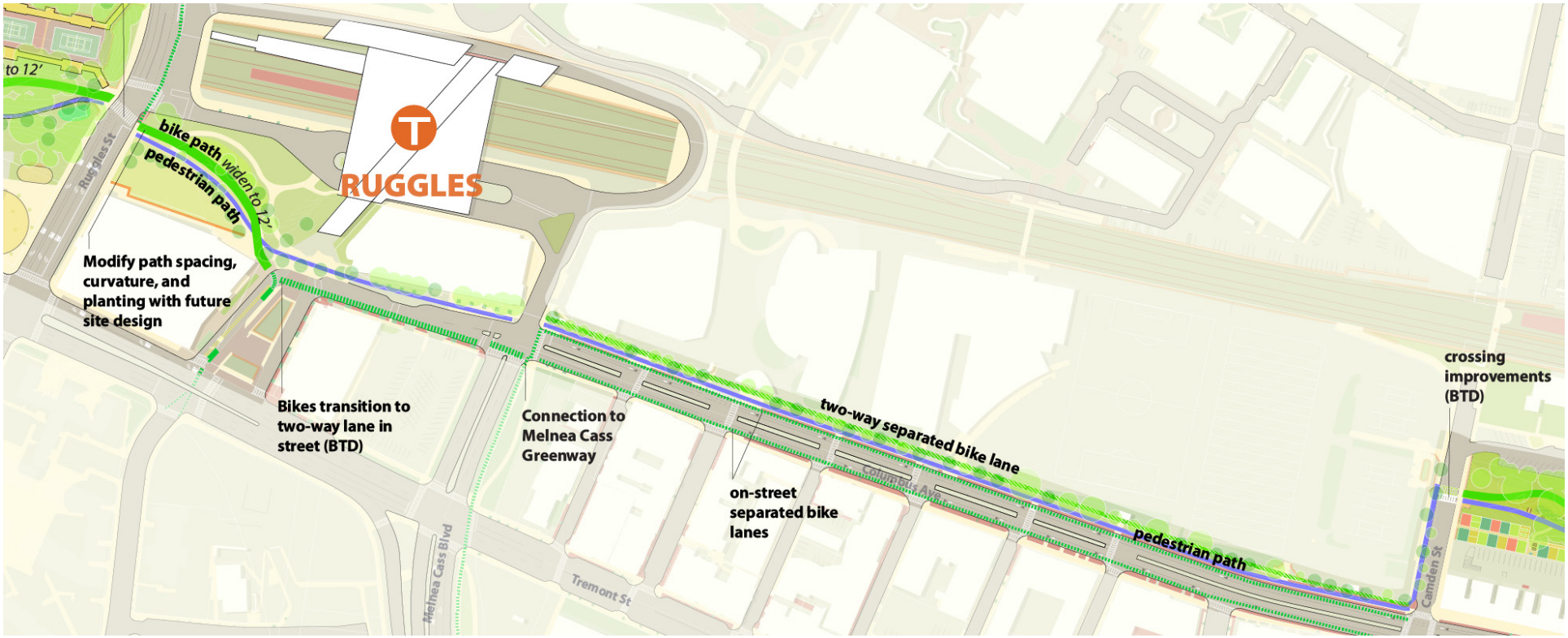
Camden to West Newton

The section of the park between West Newton Street and Camden Street will continue the shared street treatment on Claremont Street. The path through the Mass Ave T Station will be redesigned for better legibility and identity.



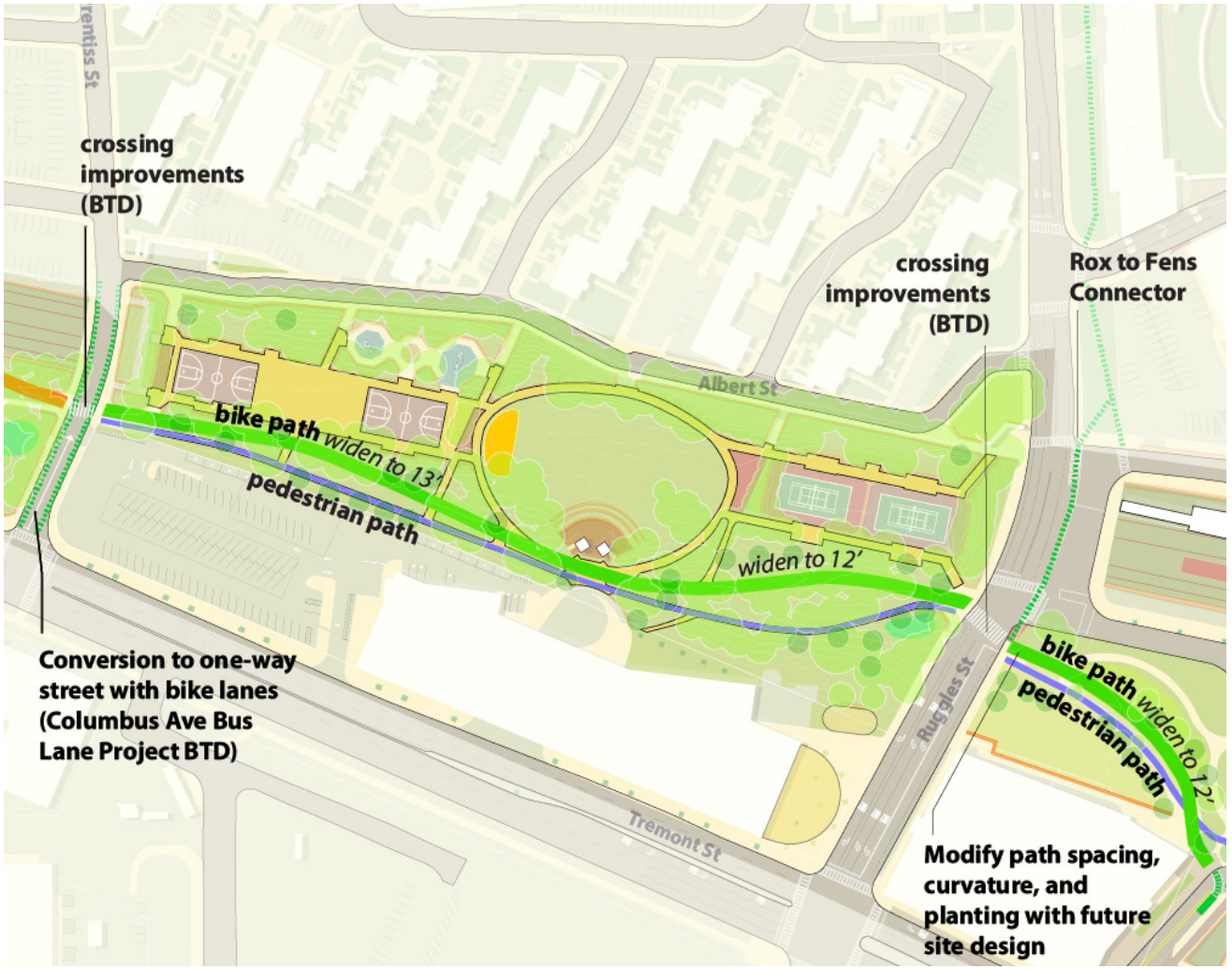
Ruggles to Camden

The section of park from Ruggles to Camden Street is primarily under the jurisdiction of Northeastern, City of Boston, or MBTA. Minimal changes are proposed, with exception of the paths directly around Ruggles T Station. These paths will be widened and realigned to better fit with the station redesign.



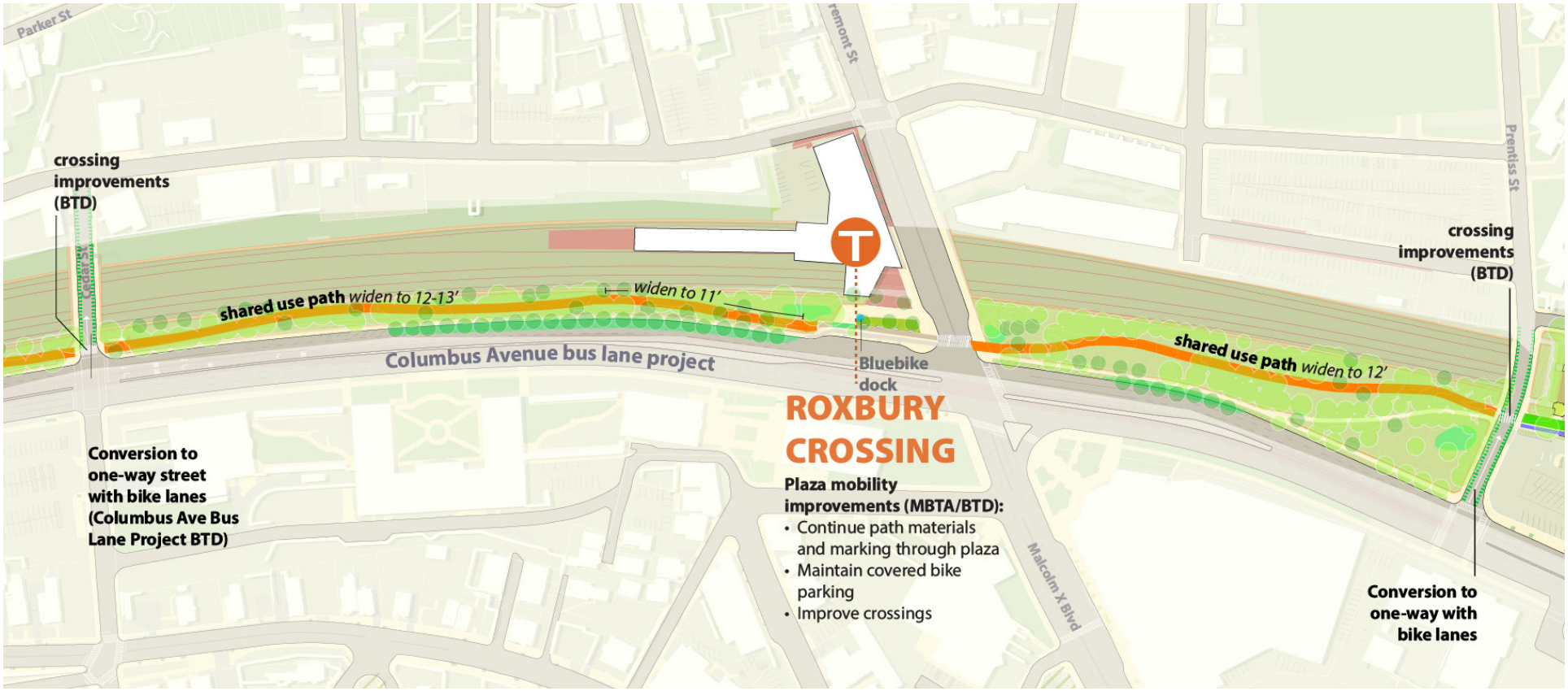
Prentiss to Ruggles

The section of park between Ruggles Street and Prentiss Street is proposed to have a wider bike path and improved crossings. A connection to the Rox to Fens connector is also planned.



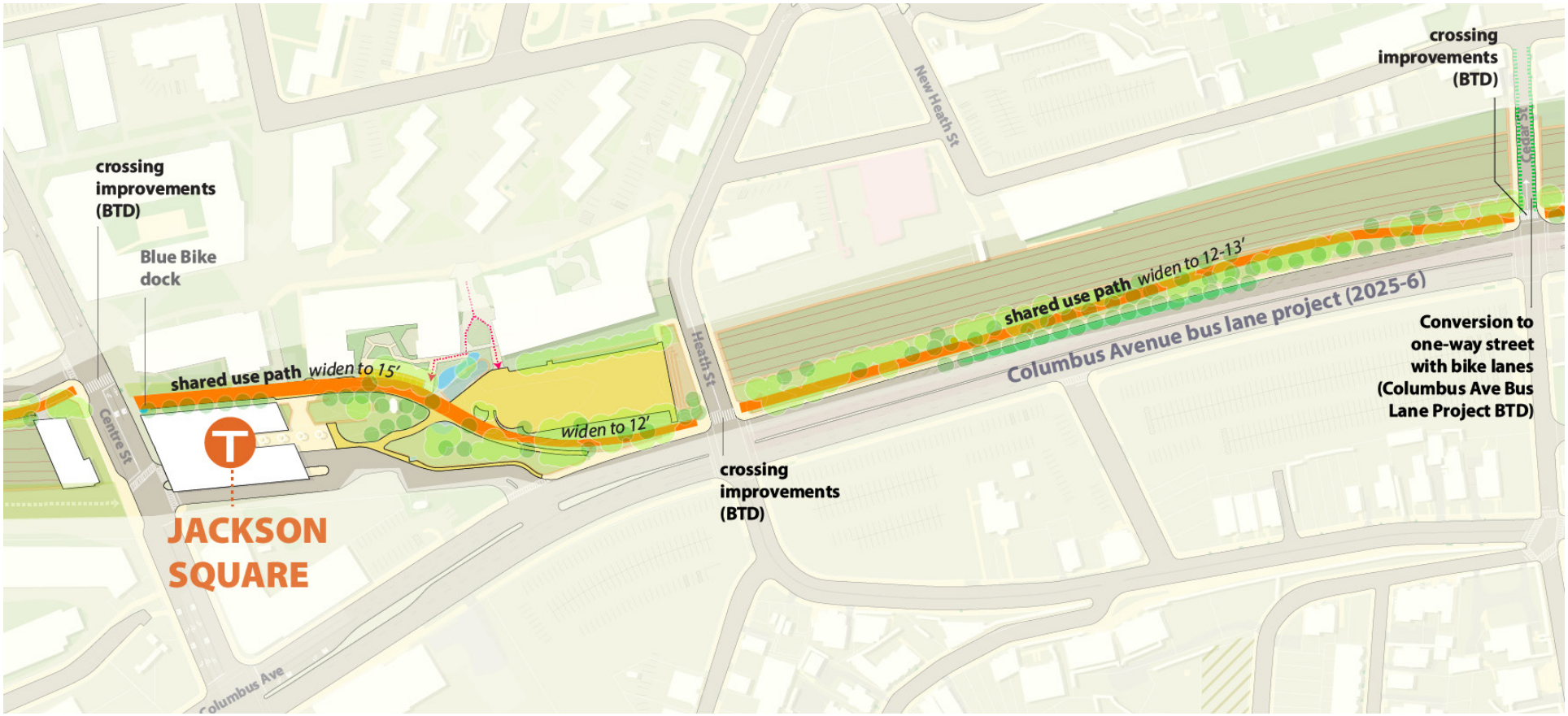
Cedar to Prentiss

The path within the park from Cedar Street to Prentiss Street is proposed to be widened and redesigned as a shared use path so all park users can experience the park. Better definition of the path through Roxbury Crossing T Station will occur with the Plaza redesign by City of Boston and MBTA.



Centre to Cedar

The section of path between Centre Street and Cedar Street will be widened and redesigned as a shared use path with entrance and crossing improvements to be performed in conjunction with City of Boston.



Atherton to Centre

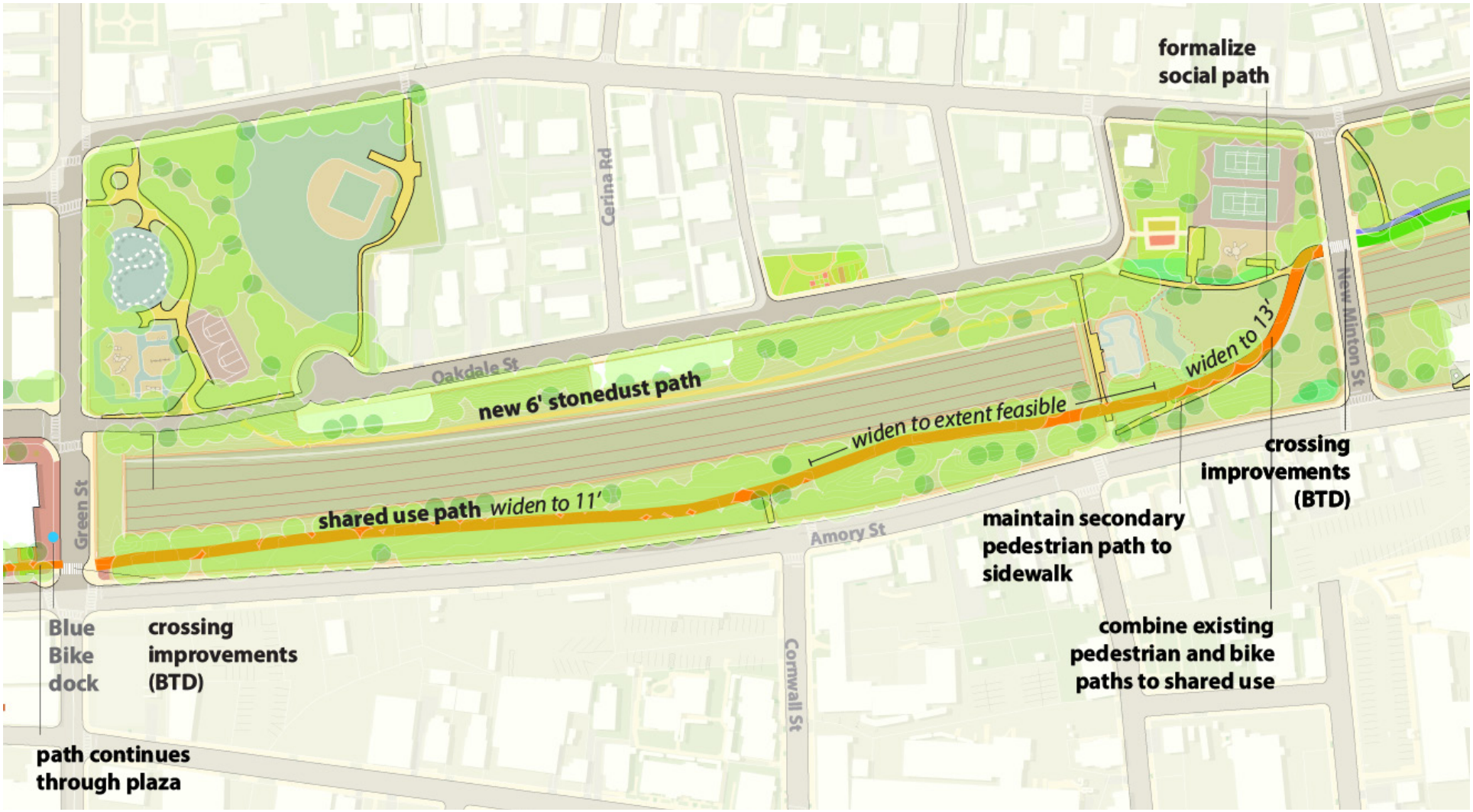
The section of path between Atherton Street and Centre Street will be widened and redesigned as a shared use path with entrance and crossing improvements to be performed in conjunction with City of Boston.

New Minton to Atherton

The section of path between Boylston Street and Atherton Street will be widened and redesigned as a shared use path. The path between New Minton Street and Boylston Street will be maintained as parallel paths with a wider bike path. A path connecting to Kelly Rink will be formalized, with entrance and crossing improvements to be performed in conjunction with City of Boston at all street crossings.

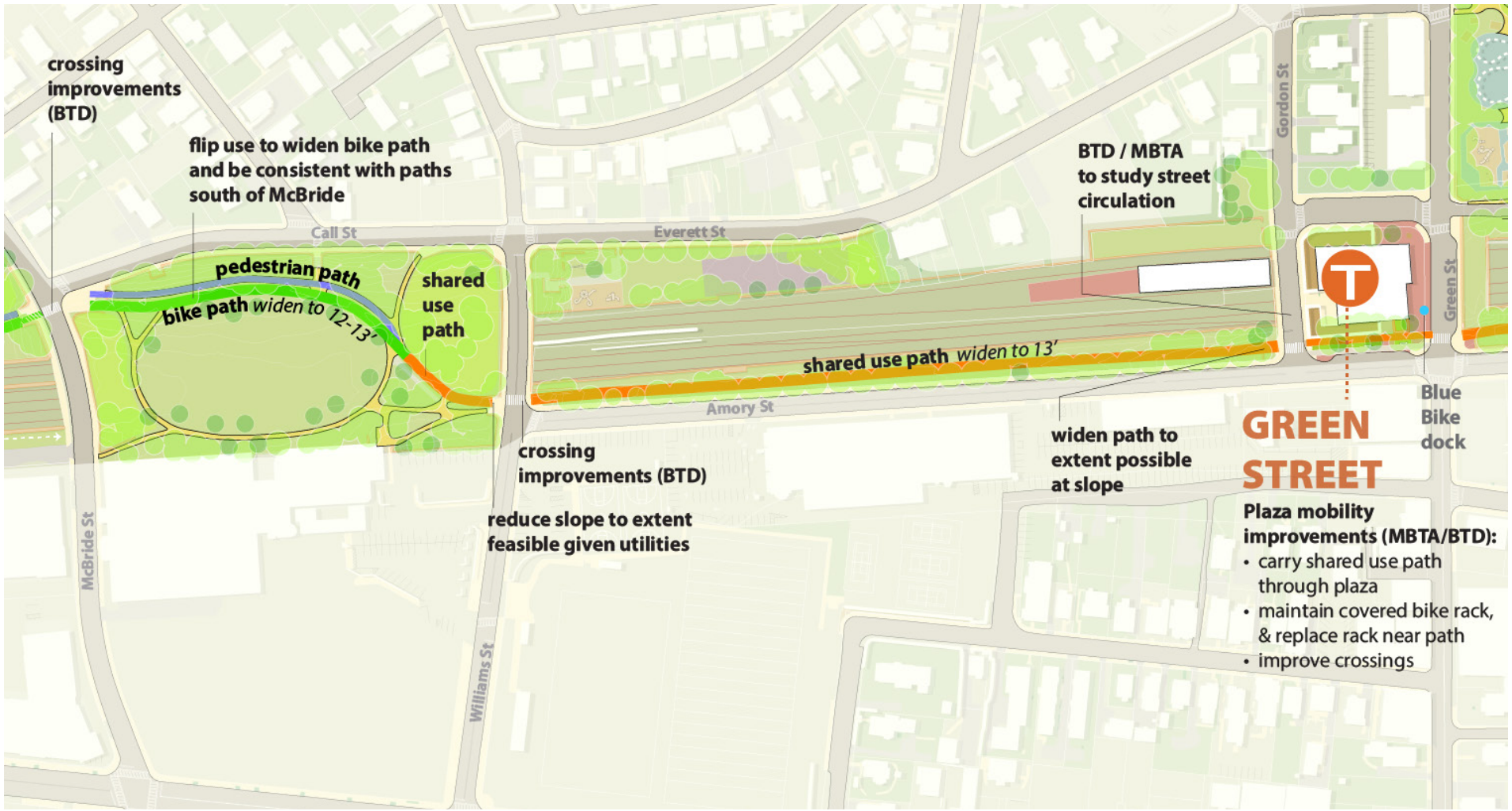
Green to New Minton

The section of path between Green Street and New Minton Street will be widened and redesigned as a shared use path with entrance and crossing improvements to be performed in conjunction with City of Boston. A new stonedust path on the west side of the tracks will connect to the proposed dog park.



McBride to Green

The section of path between Williams Street and Green Street will be widened and redesigned as a shared use path. The path between McBride Street and Williams Street will be maintained as parallel paths with a wider bike path, to be incorporated into the park redesign. The path through the Green Street T Station Plaza will be redesigned to offer better legibility of the path through the plaza.



Arborway to McBride

The section of path between Arboway and McBride Street will be a mix of parallel paths and shared use path depending on topography. Links between the two paths will be created to facilitate connections. Pedestrian desire lines will also be formalized, with entrance and crossing improvements in conjunction with City of Boston.