TO:	MassDOT	DATE:	July 9, 2024, 3-5 p.m.
FROM:	Howard Stein Hudson	HSH PROJECT NO.:	2021055.08
SUBJECT:	Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Allston Multimodal Project Throat Area/Charles River Working Group Meeting		
:	**Core Working Group Representatives:** Timothy Dexter (MassDOT, Chair) Jason Santos (DCR, Co-chair) Albert Ng (Harvard) Bill Deignan (City of Cambridge) Dennis Giombetti (SEN) Dira Johanif (CRWA) Elizabeth Leary (BU) Fred Yalouris (Community) Jason Palitsch (MetroWest Partnership) Kane Larin (CRAB) Laura Jasinski (CRC) Wenzheng Wang on behalf of Matt Petersen (City of Boston) Ali Hiple on behalf of Seth Gadbois (CLF) Tom Nally (ABC)		

Overview

On July 9, 2024, the MassDOT team for the Allston Multimodal Project virtually held the first meeting with the Throat Area/Charles River Working Group. The project team shared the Working Group's (WG) purpose, ground rules, and a general structure for the WG's meetings.

The main topics of discussion were:

- Requested desire for noise barrier, potential screening locations and materials;
- Shared, separate at the same grade, and separate at different grade pedestrian and bicycle facilities; and
- Maintenance and safety concerns for path and river users.

Requests for future meetings:

- Matrix to compare shoreline alternatives.
- A discussion of wave attenuation options.
- Requested hybrid or in person meeting option when appropriate.

Meeting Summary

Introduction to the Working Groups

PURPOSE AND GROUND RULES

- The project team created the WGs to solicit feedback from community representatives on certain elements of the project. The feedback will be shared with the executive deciding parties and used to inform decision-making for the upcoming DEIS/SDEIR filing.
- WG members should come to meetings on time and prepared to discuss the agenda items.
- Documents shared during WG meetings are generally not for public consumption. Certain documents can be forwarded to stakeholder groups to gather additional feedback.
- Looking at the number of lanes on I-90 mainline and Solider Field Road (SFR) is not within the scope of this WG.
- All designs considered are currently limited to one acre of fill to fit with the parameters of the Army Corps' general permit.
- Specific designs for any alternative will not be finalized by the end of the WG meetings – there will still be room to add elements from other options and make changes during design development of plans to be used for project procurement

STRUCTURE

Discussion

- The goal of the WGs is to choose concepts to structure the submissions for the environmental filings. More studies can and will be conducted on the chosen concepts as the project progresses.
- It would be helpful if there was a table comparing the four shoreline alternatives.

Shoreline Alternatives

OPTION 1: SOLID FILL

Option 1 is the full fill version with a granite retaining wall and two separate 10'-wide paths separated by planting buffers. Modifications include adjusting path widths to 8' pedestrian path and 12' bicycle path; splitting the elevation of the bike path - which would be at road grade – and the pedestrian path - which would be closer to the river's edge, incorporating stepped granite blocks at the river's edge, and a planted hedge along SFR.

Discussion

- Comments:
  - Project team should consider lowering the bicycle path to same grade as pedestrian path.
  - Team should consider shared use path to increase total width of buffered/plantings.
- Support:
  - The tiers can be used to maintain separation between different path users.
  - This is the best option from a maintenance perspective.
- Concern:
  - Bicyclists not familiar with the area may use the pedestrian path and then be stuck on it.
  - Wall along river does not allow for boaters who may seeking refuge or a break from the river.

OPTION 2: VARIED SHORELINE EDGE

Option 2 has a varied edge treatment with three different edge conditions along the throat area. There are three different variations:

A. Granite wall
B. Terraced granite block wall
C. Planted embankment

The modification uses a single pier structure for the raised walkway.

OPTION 3: SOLID FILL AND PILE SUPPORTED WALKWAY

Option 3 has an at-grade walkway for ~1/3 of the throat area and a pile supported structure for the remaining 2/3 of the walkway. The modification distributes the river's edge treatment more evenly throughout the throat area.

OPTION 4: PILE SUPPORTED WALKWAY

Option 4 had a reduced amount of fill and a structure along the entire length of the shoreline. Modifications include a single- or mono-pier approach, exploring hedge planting along SFR, and exploring the potential for floating wetlands.

WAVE ATTENUATION FEATURES

- The project team is exploring wave attenuation features:
  - Stepped edge
  - Planted edge
  - Floating wetlands

- More detailed designs are needed to flesh out how these will work as the river height changes.
- The project team is open to hearing feedback from the boating community about using one or a combination of these features.

Sound Barrier Discussion

NOISE WALL BETWEEN I-90 AND SFR

- Comments:
  - Several WG members expressed desire for this to be an option.
- Support:
  - The barrier should go between SFR and I-90 (vs between SFR and PDW path) because I-90 generates more noise than SFR.
- Concerns:
  - Noise studies have been conducted and found that putting a sound barrier will not have significant impacts on noise volumes.
  - The noise wall may reflect sound and instead create an echo along SFR and the PDW path.

NOISE WALL BETWEEN SFR AND THE PDW PATH

- Comments:
  - The project team hasn't previously discussed putting a sound barrier in this location.
- Support:
  - A structure between SFR and the PDW path will help buffer pedestrians from roadway hazards.
- Concerns:
  - The entire stretch being "walled off" and how this disrupts the Parkway experience.
  - It may be difficult to configure the actual structure of a wall if it has to go under SFR.
  - The structure will eat up planted and other potentially usable space.
  - Safety concerns as pedestrians may feel too hidden.
  - Safety concerns in the event of an emergency on the river.
  - Could prevent including a midway turnout point in design for emergency vehicle use.

LOWER ELEVATION PEDESTRIAN AND/OR BICYCLE PATHS

- Comments:
  - The retaining wall could be moved to be along SFR to serve as a mini noise wall.

- Concerns:
  - Safety concerns as pedestrians may feel too hidden.
  - Higher level of maintenance.

SEGMENTS OF PLANTED HEDGES

- Comments:
  - Segmented to maintain intermittent views from the Parkway.
- Concerns:
  - Will not greatly reduce noise volumes.

Discussion

- There will be some sort of structure between I-90 and SFR, but what the structure will look like has yet to be determined.
- Vehicles are being given more consideration than pedestrians and bicyclists. There should be some protection for the path users, especially given that we have not eliminated any lanes. It's ridiculous to weigh the view for drivers the same as path-user safety.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

SHARED FACILITIES

- Support:
  - Easier to maintain.
  - Easier for emergency vehicles to access.
  - Pedestrians will feel less isolated.
- Concerns:
  - More difficult for people with visual impairments for knowing where they're supposed to be especially where bicycles can be very quiet.

SEPARATE FACILITIES AT THE SAME GRADE

- Support:
  - Vehicles can still travel along the wider path to access the narrower path.

SEPARATE FACILITIES AT DIFFERENT GRADES

- Comments:
  - Where and how will the lower level connect to the upper level?
- Concerns:
  - Higher level of maintenance.

- If PDW path is on a structure (vs on fill) it will freeze more as there's no thermal mass underneath the structure.

Discussion

- The paths are separate outside of the throat area.
- When pedestrian and bicycle paths are split horizontally and/or vertically, we have to consider maintaining enough space for access for emergency vehicles, plows, etc.
- If the paths are different widths, they will need different sized plows.
- Must consider the directionality of the sun and how shade from trees will hit the path.

Action Items:

- WG members asked to bring slides back to stakeholder groups and come to the next meeting with more feedback, more questions.
- WG members asked to begin to think about which alternative they would like to see further development
- Project team to review the comments and questions that were raised.
- Project team to develop a matrix of the shoreline alternatives for group to discuss at a future meeting.

Meeting Invitees

Name	Working Group Role	Affiliation
Tim Dexter	Chair	MassDOT Env.
Jason Santos	Co-Chair	DCR
Greg Robbins	SME	DCR
Ruth Helfeld	SME	DCR
Zach Veaner	SME – Head Highway Designer	MassDOT
Stacey Donahoe	SME	MassDOT
Ali Hiple	Core Working Group Member (Alternate)	CLF
Albert Ng	Core Working Group Member – University Affiliate	Harvard University
Bill Deignan	Core Working Group Member	City of Cambridge
Dennis Giombetti	Core Working Group Member – MetroWest	Office of Sen. Karen Spilka
Dira Jahanif	Core Working Group Member – River Advocate	CRWA
Elizabeth Leary	Core Working Group Member – University Affiliate	Boston University
Fred Yalouris	Core Working Group Member – Community	Allston Task Force, Community Advocate
Jason Palitsch	Core Working Group Member – MetroWest	495/MetroWest Partnership
Kane Larin	Core Working Group Member – River User	CRAB
Laura Jasinski	Core Working Group Member – River User	CRC
Wenzheng Wang	Core Working Group Member (Alternate)	BTD
Seth Gadbois	Core Working Group Member	CLF
Tom Nally	Core Working Group Member	ABC
Glen Berkowitz	Core Working Group Member (Alternate)	ABC
Dave Andrews	Project Team	BRR
Erin Reed	Project Team	HSH
Jim Keller	Project Team	TetraTech
John Curry	Project Team	HSH
Mark Fobert	Project Team	TetraTech
Meredith Avery	Project Team	VHB

Monique Hall	Project Team	BRR
Nicole Sharma	Project Team	HSH
Susan Harrington	Project Team	MassDOT
Taylor O'Neill	Project Team	HSH