



NORWOTTUCK NETWORK

MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL —BOSTON TO NORTHAMPTON—104 MILES

Dear Draw One Bridge Replacement Project Team,

June 13, 2024

As part of Massachusetts' required mitigation for the Central Artery and Tunnel ("Big Dig") project, the predecessor to Massachusetts DCR produced the "New Charles River Basin Master Plan"1 in 1995. This Plan required: New walkways and foot-bridges at the old dam, the Green Line viaduct, the North Point inlet, the bascule railroad bridges, and the Charlestown Bridge. <https://archive.org/details/newcharlesriverb00mass/page/12/mode/2up>

This bascule railroad bridge is the proposed \$1.2 B North Station Draw One Bridge Replacement project. Yet these plans do not contain a pedestrian walkway. <https://www.mbta.com/projects/north-station-drawbridge-replacement>

Christian MilNeil of StreetsBlog Mass writes: *According to a February 2019 presentation to a New Charles River Basin Citizens Advisory Committee, the DCR still had \$30.5 million in Big Dig mitigation funds available to complete five projects in the area, one of which was a "Draw One Walkway." At the time, DCR estimated that the walkway would cost \$3.3 million. The meeting also alluded to an Interagency Service Agreement – a sort of contract between government agencies – that obligated the DCR to use those funds to complete the walkway.* <https://mass.streetsblog.org/2024/06/05/will-a-new-rail-bridge-across-the-charles-include-a-long-promised-walkway-to-north-station>

At the June 6, 2024, public meeting for the North Station Draw One Bridge replacement, the public expressed deep concern that this pedestrian walkway is not included in the plans. However, we were told that a pedestrian path "could not" be included "practically" in a combination train and pedestrian drawbridge over the Charles River, and so any pedestrian bridge must be built as an entirely separate project at an indeterminate time. Worse still, the Draw One construction would take approximately 8 years and a separate pedestrian bridge could not be built during this construction.

The public is due a far better explanation of why the Commonwealth is continuing to fail to meet the legal obligations from the Big Dig. For context, a few hundred yards down the Charles River, the Craigie Drawbridge, opens for boat traffic while carrying pedestrians, bicyclists, and cars.

A combination train and pedestrian drawbridge is also a solved problem outside of Boston.

> In 1912 the Steel Bridge in Portland Oregon was built, carrying Union Pacific and Amtrak railroad cars, vehicle traffic, MAX Light rail, bicyclists, and sidewalks. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steel_Bridge

> A world class landmark and bascule bridge, the Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, carries 2 tramway tracks, 4 traffic lanes, 2 cycle tracks, 2 sidewalks, and was built for just €165 million in 1996. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erasmusbrug>

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This local path is important; linking the two sides of the Charles, connecting the Community Path/Mass Central Rail Trail to Boston. It is a much safer option than North Washington or Craigie, and the locks are narrow, not ADA compliant, and unpredictably close to pedestrians. If one goal is to increase MBTA ridership, there is nothing better than to make it much easier to get to a major train / subway / bus hub without dodging traffic.

We insist the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must meet the legal obligations of the Big Dig mitigation and include a pedestrian and bicyclist pathway on the Draw One Bridge Replacement project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Ben Bayes" in a cursive style.

Benjamin Bayes

Norwottuck Network Board

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Rob Kusner" in a cursive style.

Rob Kusner

Norwottuck Network Board

CC: MBTA Board of Directors, MBTA Capital Planning, MassDOT Secretary Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Governor Maura Healy, Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, MassDOT Bike-Ped Coordinator Peter Sutton