

Belmont Community Path Advisory Committee
(CPAC) Public Forum #1
27 Feb. 2013 (Belmont High School)
Responses to Questions and Comments

Accepted 10 July 2013.

Note: Questions are in black; *responses are in green italic.*

Encompass
McLean/Beaver Brook/Fresh Pond/Audubon/Western Greenway/ Clark
Street Bridge

Pedestrian access to path at Clark Street Bridge

We are looking at this approach.

I think that- to the extent possible there should be an off road path from the MBTA path (E) to the Beaver Brook Path (W). I liked the idea of having some of it on McLean land, but not so steep that it is difficult for inexperienced (out of shape) and walkers.

It is a priority of CPAC to make the path usable to a wide range of people and activities.

I also think that a bike/walking path off road heading to Audubon / habitat and connecting to the Western Greenway would be excellent.

We are looking at this approach.

I would like easier access for Belmont residents to Fresh Pond Reservoir walking paths.

A trail would likely provide this by making Belmont a more bicycle-friendly and walking-friendly town.

Parking

1. How are you going to address people parking in the streets and accessing the path that creates traffic concerns for the community?

This is usually not a problem in practice because most people bicycle or walk to paths. People could use Town lots; parking restrictions could be imposed if necessary. If people are currently parking in no-parking areas, then the Police could enforce that.

Against Channing Road

Not Channing Road

Channing Road has been looked at; as part of that investigation by the Committee it was pointed out that there are many driveways that might make it hazardous for cyclists.

For Concord Avenue

1. In East Belmont,
 - on road (Concord Avenue), turn at one of businesses and go on side away from Channing Road along tracks to Center

We are looking at a variation of this option.

2. In East Belmont,
 - run along High School side **OR** run along Concord Ave in elevated bike lane(curbed) **OR** get more Channing Road neighbors to agree

These options are being looked at.

2. The path should be on Concord Ave where there are paths that already connect to Concord Ave.

Safety considerations, motor-vehicle traffic volume, and general appeal would need to be addressed.

Functionality

High School/Library/Post Office/ Parks/Businesses

3. Branch to the Library

This is a possible option. If a path were built near the library we would look at how to provide safe access to it from the path.

In order for me to use the bike path it needs to be on the High School side- I would access-Tennis Courts, Skating Rink, Post Office, and Library from that side of the tracks- On the other side I would only have access to Belmont Center or Alewife- useless to me.
We are looking at that option.

Extend the bike path as it is in Cambridge for Concord Avenue. It would give access to Fresh Pond- and all services in Belmont-Post Office, Library, Skating Rink, etc.
We are looking at that option and considering safety and feasibility considerations.

New business access from paths should not be near tracks all too dangerous, liability issues, safety.
We are taking that into consideration.

Off Road

“Any trail is better than no trail the sooner, the better- we can’t wait! We live along Royal Road and we would rather have the path in the woods instead of along the road.”
We are looking at ways to make this happen soon, since it could provide a wide range of benefits to the community. There are concerns related to wetlands that might impose some restrictions on a path in the woods adjacent to Royal Road.

On Road/Road Sharing

Concord Avenue with curb separating bikes and traffic.
Safety considerations of car parking and driveways/intersections is being evaluated for that route.

Move Underwood Street existing bike lane to other side.
Underwood is a one-way street, so two-way bike traffic would need to be carefully thought out to avoid dangers of counter-flow cycling on a one-way street.

Create/Modify Bridges and Tunnels

4. Use:
 - use bicycle bridge beside railroad bridge in center? Right over underpass like Storrow Drive? Too Ugly?

Would want to investigate more fully the possibility of using existing granite bridge, prior to building new bridges. Overpass would require a lot of space for ramp to meet

ADA compliance. Nature of historical granite bridge limits what can be constructed in close proximity to it.

- Bike bridge behind office building on Concord Avenue near Belmont Center to town center or to tunnel that leads to Royal Road

A bridge would require a long ramp. We would explore that option as a backup if other crossing options were unfeasible.

1. Tunnel connecting High School to Alexander Ave

We are looking at this option.

Redo Clark Street Bridge to avoid the Center

Adding an additional bridge in Belmont Center has practical limitations but could be looked at further if more information were provided.

Pricing

Cost to Residents/Funding/Budget/Sponsorship

1. Most cost effective path

Yes, this is an important criteria.

2. Would like funding to address water concerns.

This is not currently in our charge, but it may be considered if it aligns with the Committee's charter.

3. Would like funding to address soil testing along Channing Road (train side).

This was not done on the new path to Alewife and was not an issue there, as it's the same former rail-road right-of-way. Capping with a hard trail surface would help contain any remnant chemicals as opposed to leaving them exposed. If reports are available on how other trails addressed this, it would be greatly appreciated and we could explore how this was handled there and elsewhere.

Concerned about what cost will be to the town, safety and one more thing not fair that other people from other towns should have input.

We are researching the funding options. Often times, state and federal agencies fund a large percentage of shared-use trails. Receiving such funding is more likely if there is wide support among a large community. A trail could also serve people who shop, work, or go to school in Belmont, but who don't necessarily live here.

Engage bike shop for sponsorship.

It is possible that we may investigate this in the future when we have more definitive plans.

Environmental Impact Drainage/Soil

4. Water drainage concerns (mainly with potential path behind Channing Road).

Constructing a trail along that former right-of-way might provide an opportunity to improve the water-drainage situation. If the former rail right-of-way is used it appears that few trees would need to be cut down. Alternatively, construction of a trail along the south side of the railroad (i.e., behind the High School) would seem to require removal of several large trees with wide root systems. That may impact drainage and flooding for buildings in the vicinity of the MBTA rail line both to the south and to the north. In any case, measures to address drainage issues will need to be based on competent engineering analysis of the underlying hydrology.

Trail Suggestions/Routes

Behind the Post Office, High School, and Pure Coat.

The High School property is being looked at. Insufficient space exists behind Post Office and on the south edge of the granite bridge. Width behind former Pure Coat building is constrained by building and railroad signal towers, and would require bike/ped. crossing of active rail lines; if routed that way would likely need to have an on-road section using Hittinger Street.

“ I would like to see it go down Hittinger Street to behind the High School cross the High School fields to the Belmont Center bridge on town owned land across the Clark Street bridge, along Pleasant Street on the McLean side across Trapelo Road through the Beaver Brook Reservation to the link up on Beaver Street in Waltham.”

We are looking at some of these options, and thank you for suggesting them.

Pass through woods along tracks by Royal Road, under Clark Street Bridge -- staying at track level keeps path more level.

We are looking at these options.

Its two different paths:

1. one for transportation commuters
2. one for recreation use by families

Multiple paths are being looked at, and more research is required to determine whether this is feasible.

West Belmont:

It would be nice to utilize to open space along Royal Road and if it would also be nice to use the Clark Street bridge to cross to the north side of the tracks. Cross Pleasant Street and go up snake hill a short distance. It looks like there is an empty lot that belongs to Snake Hill - get easement and then cross onto the town owned land and build a path above Pleasant Street. Take it as far as you can and have a crosswalk into Beaver Brook Reservoir exit BBR in Waltham (try to keep as much of the path off-road as possible).

We are looking at these options.

Tributary Trails:

Grove Street off road cycle path

We are looking at that option in the context of possible tributary trails. However, while it is a good idea, it is not currently in our listing of potential route segments though might be included in future developments of cycling and pedestrian accommodations in Belmont.

Dalton Street

We are looking at that option in the context of possible tributary trails. However, while it is a good idea, it is not currently in our listing of potential route segments though might be included in future developments of cycling and pedestrian accommodations in Belmont.

Connect schools

We are looking at this.

Safety

Roads/Rail/Crime

5. Safety- Do not feel it is safe to put a path along a live rail trail.

Rail-with-trail paths exist in many places and have excellent safety records. Best practices would be used to separate trail from rail using perhaps safety fencing. Similarly, we are also considering the safety factors of cyclists and pedestrians on motor-vehicle roadways and at roadway intersections, since those danger incidents have a higher likelihood of occurrence.

Has there been detailed research on crime rates violent and misdemeanor on houses that about bike paths?

Yes, we are looking at this topic. Generally, police reports and track records indicate that trails actually have lower crime rates than the communities they pass through. Having a trail developed along an abandoned right-of-way makes it easier to patrol and get emergency/public safety responders there in cases when needed. Multi-use off-road trails are required to support access by fire and police vehicles in case of emergency, so police cars and other emergency vehicles could access such trails in emergency situations.

2. Slow traffic and speed traps along Channing between Belmont Center and Sherman.
We are aware of this situation.

The most visible route should be the safest.
Other safety factors include intersections, proximity of car parking, driveways, and roadway volume and speed.

3. The path should be in well lit areas where it is public and part of the community and not just a quiet area that poses community safety concerns.
Any area developed for trail use would be a public area, and safety concerns are a significant consideration.

4. Who is responsible for the public safety and patrol for crimes during all hours?
Generally trails are self-policing. Police, Fire, and EMT would be called on as necessary to assist in emergency situations, just as they are for other locations in Town. The CPAC is also currently engaging with the police on this topic, and it might be possible to arrange a meeting/Q&A on this topic with the police. Please stay tuned.

Access Points

Access to path
Yes, we desire for the community to have access to the path.

Provide Bike/Multi-use path to encourage bikers and pedestrians away from the intersection of Concord-Leonard-Common Streets.
This safety consideration is a high priority based on the safety issues of that intersection.

For Active Rail Use

We should make use of the existing rail beds as much as possible; The MBTA owns a lot of land on the North side of the tracks! Very safe and plenty of ways for home owners to be separated from the riders/ walkers.

We are looking at these options.

Community Waverley/Belmont Center/Trapelo Road/Cushing Square

What is the plan for Trapelo Road's bike path? Can we investigate to make sure there is enough room dedicated?

The design plans for Trapelo Road are available from the Town via the webpage below:

http://www.town.belmont.ma.us/Public_Documents/F00010E1A/TACProjects/TrapBelReconstruct

The design of the Trapelo Road and Belmont Street reconstruction are outside the scope of the CPAC's charge. The design work has been underway for nearly ten years and is now complete and cannot be changed. The construction work will be going out to bid in the near future.

There should be an elevated bike ramp through Waverley Station and should loop around to Lexington Street sidewalk.

We are looking at this option.

How do we get the trail to go Trapelo Rd/Cushing Square/ Belmont street?

If the trail connects to Waverly Square, then could use Trapelo Road re-development (bike accommodations) to access Cushing Square and Belmont Street. As stated above, the design of the Trapelo Road and Belmont Street reconstruction are outside the scope of the CPAC's charge. The design work has been underway for nearly ten years and is now complete and cannot be changed. The construction work will be going out to bid in the near future. We are looking at ways to connect a Community Path to this corridor, so this suggestion will be taken into consideration.

Abutting Communities

Really excited to think we could be linked into the longer paths rail/trail conversions across Massachusetts.

This is an important objective of the CPAC.

In order to connect Cambridge with Belmont and encourage people to access to the High School, new and established areas including the old Sandler building I think to utilize Underwood and Baker up to Concord Ave into the center.

We are looking at that possible option. Underwood St. is one-way and there is limited means to have it simultaneously support two-way bicycle/pedestrian traffic.

Miscellaneous

Coordination needed between the Bike Committee and the Center Committee.

Good suggestion. We are looking into coordinating this, and have reviewed those plans. However, the Belmont Center re-design is outside the scope of the CPAC's charge. The design work has been underway for several years and is now complete and cannot be changed. The construction work will be going out to bid after funding is secured. We are indeed looking at ways to integrate a Community Path into this Belmont Center existing design, so this suggestion will be taken into consideration.

Let's think Public Works instead of trying to squeeze a path through. If the new Belmont Street/ Trapelo Corridor is constructed without a bike track, the town will be poorer for having it. If Belmont Center is not redesigned with attention to cyclists-tracks and parking for bikes, we will have lost a great opportunity to become a friendlier, greener town.

Yes, planning and preparation for bike accommodations needs to be carefully considered and thought out ahead of time, as opposed to being an afterthought.

Community paths are very valuable and greatly benefit the community.

Yes, there are a wide range of benefits that trails provide a community with -- public health, transportation, recreation, providing safe routes to school, and reducing roadway congestion to name a few.

TO JEFF ROTH:

You said during your introduction tonight that there's "never been a forum" for the community to speak about this? I've been to two of them.

The statement was in reference to there not having previously been an opportunity for community to provide specific input into trail routes. Other forums have occurred though they were different in structure. We are seeking as much public input as possible, and the Committee is working to organize some interchange with the Police, and possibly the Fire department.

What is the purpose of the CPAC? What is the charge to them from the Board of Selectmen?

c.f. Rules of Governance Document for CPAC (available from Town Hall) Also available on the towns website CPAC page/ additional links /"Committee's Charge"

http://www.town.belmont.ma.us/Public_Documents/BelmontMA_BComm/CPAC/CPAC

Cost?

We do not know cost yet since there is currently not a baseline design for this path.

Drainage issues

Might be opportunity to improve this if there are currently drainage problems. In addition, measures to address drainage issues will need to be based on competent engineering analysis of the underlying hydrology.

Maintenance

We are looking at the maintenance topic.

Safety

Key topics are safety for nearby residences, improving safety near railroad tracks, and selection of path route to maximize safety for trail users so they are not exposed to dangers of motor-vehicle roadways. Also, if there are already people using unofficial trails adjacent to the railway, the safety issue is that there is currently no protective fencing blocking access to the rails and avoiding dangers and illegal trespassing of the rails. This also applies to the case of children crossing the active rails near the High School.

Lighting

Generally lighting is not used on community paths, but this could be considered.

Noise control

Paths generally do not cause significant noise and are usually quiet and peaceful places. It would be helpful to know the specific nature of any noise problems currently originating along the former Mass Central Rail Road right-of-way and when specifically they tend to occur, so we could better understand this question.