

From: Pete Stidman

Sent: Fri 10/8/2010 7:55 PM

To: [LongFellow Bridge Task Force](#)

Cc:

Subject: Boston Cyclists Union Comments on Longfellow Task Force Draft
Recommendations of 10-6-10

Attachments: [Boston-Cyclists-Union-Longfellow-comment-letter10-8-10.pdf\(242KB\)](#)

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(pdf attached)

October, 8, 2010

Dear members of the Longfellow Bridge Task Force,

On behalf of cyclists and Union members from all the neighborhoods of Boston, including several of our members who abut the project area on both sides of the Charles River, herein are comments from the Boston Cyclists Union on the Task Force's Draft Recommendations, which were presented to the community on October 6, 2010.

As many of you have noted, this project will determine the future of this important bridge for hundreds of years hence. As one of the most historically and architecturally significant bridges in our region, Longfellow is unique in connecting not only Boston to Cambridge, but also our past to our future.

When the then "Cambridge" Bridge was commissioned in 1898, it was to be a bridge "suitable for all the purposes of ordinary travel between said cities, and for the use of the elevated and surface cars of the Boston Elevated Railway Company."[\[1\]](#)

That "ordinary travel" surely included the bicycle along with horse and carriage, trains along the two rail lines using the bridge, and the occasional automobile. We know this because the 1890s were the peak of the bicycle craze in the U.S., and Boston was considered a leader in this trend.

The first bicycle club founded in the U.S. was the Boston Bicycle Club, which shortly thereafter produced the first president of the League of American Wheelmen.

Even the 1908 completion of the bridge predated the explosion in U.S. automobile use that occurred in the teens and twenties, and as a result the Longfellow's design, held against our other bridges over the Charles, speaks to a time when slower travel meant more attention to detail.

It is visually apparent that architect Edmund Wheelwright designed the Longfellow to be appreciated by those who pass over it, knowing well that they would have time to view its columns and to peer over the side at the prows of Viking ships that are carved into its granite columns.

We have since passed through the age of the automobile, which one could say peaked culturally sometime between the 1950s and 1970s. During this time, divided lanes were painted across the bridge, cars began travelling faster and faster, and one of the bridges train lines (today's Blue Line) discontinued its use of the inner traffic lane. The Longfellow, noticed less and less, fell into disrepair and became a target for vandals.

Now, times are changing again for the bridge, and for all of us. As noted in the Kiplinger Letter last month, Generation Y by and large does not consider an automobile to be at the top of their wish lists. "Motorists

aged 21 to 30 now account for 14% of miles driven, down from 21% in 1995.”^[2] This fact is amplified by the fact that Generation Y is more populous than that of the Baby Boomers, who are now also buying fewer cars. Despite the continued use of ‘projected growth’ in automobile traffic as a design principle by planners, the evident trends, particularly in our cities, do not concur.

Recognizing this future and encouraging its coming for reasons of public health, congestion relief, and improved quality of life, both Boston and Cambridge are busy creating new bike lanes, cycletracks, pedestrian plazas and wider sidewalks in every new project, reconstruction or repaving.

In addition to being an important link for commuters, the network of paths along both sides of the Charles River already serve thousands of Bostonians as a place to exercise and seek meditative refuge from the rigors of city life.

The motivations of preserving this bridge’s history, which has long been ignored, and of progressing toward a better future, both bring the Boston Cyclists Union to the conclusion that an extremely safe and passable inbound side for both pedestrians and cyclists of any age is vital to the success of this project.

A wide sidewalk and a wide, buffered bike lane will ensure that small children, our elder citizens, and bike-sharing tourists have access to a beautiful recreational loop in the heart of Boston and a key commuter link between our cities. We believe this will elevate the Longfellow in the public mind and heart to the kind of appreciation (in a relative scale) felt for the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, or the Golden Gate of San Francisco.

In particular, missing the opportunity to choose **INBOUND OPTION B (15’ sidewalks and 12’ buffered bike lane) for the full length of the bridge** would mean missing the opportunity to take the Longfellow Bridge into this treasured status, missing the chance to make it a destination in itself and a safe place for cyclists of any age. We strongly support this option and a resulting design that would include the largest possible painted buffer between cars and bicycles.

This is the only option that would allow families, elders, and bike-sharing tourists to bike across the bridge safely.

We also support **OUTBOUND OPTION B (13’ sidewalks and 14’ buffered bike lane)** and applaud all of the task force’s diligent work on improving connections on both sides of the bridge. These connections will be a stunning improvement to current conditions.

We do not feel that a five-foot bike lane on either side will be adequate to meet latent demand now, and certainly not 10, 20, or 100 years from now. At the very least, provisions must be made for future widening of these bike lanes to at least 10 feet wide in either direction, including room for painted buffers between automobile and bicycle users.

Traffic queuing problems caused by Charles Circle and affecting inbound traffic could be addressed by enlarging the scope of the design to find ways to redirect other non-bridge traffic away from Charles Circle.

To not address improving the flow of Charles Circle at this time, with a precedent setting bridge reconstruction underway, ignores the potential benefits of a safer bridge for generations to come.

Finally, we also support any and all structural adjustments that would widen the “pinch points” on the Boston side of the bridge.

Thank you all for your hard work, consideration, and civic service,

Pete Stidman

Director,

Boston Cyclists Union

bostoncyclistsunion.org

[1] 1898 Cambridge Bridge Commission

[2] <http://www.kiplinger.com/businessresource/forecast/archive/no-cars-for-generation-y.html#ixzz11nvxsmk0>

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Pete Stidman

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October, 8, 2010

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Pete Stidman
Director,
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From: Elizabeth Bierer

Sent: Fri 10/8/2010 8:53 PM

To: [LongFellow Bridge Task Force](#)

Cc:

Subject: Longfellow Bridge

Attachments:

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Hello,

I think I like Inbound Alternative A and Outbound Alternative B. I ride across the bridge regularly, and there are many bikes and pedestrians. The current bike lane is not wide enough for all the cycles, and riding on the sidewalk is problematical as there are many pedestrians.

Driving across the bridge from Boston to Cambridge is usually not very crowded, and many drivers speed because there isn't much traffic. I think one car lane would work fine.

Elizabeth Bierer

From: John Collins

Sent: Fri 10/8/2010 9:28 PM

To: [LongFellow Bridge Task Force](#)

Cc: [John Collins](#)

Subject: Comments on the Longfellow Bridge Draft Recommendations

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Following the presentations at the public meeting on October 6, I would like to submit the following comments:

1. It was most refreshing to hear that "level of service" finally applies to all users, not just vehicular users.
2. If the vehicular problem on the upstream side is caused largely by restrictions at Charles Circle, why have more lanes in that direction? Wouldn't one lane help prevent the circle from overload/stall and hence improve the overall situation?
3. I suggest that the cycle lanes do double duty as a breakdown lanes/shoulders. That way drivers in the single lane can pull over when they break down or when an ambulance needs to get through in an emergency. This will be much safer than the current situation where drivers have no place to move aside.

-- John Collins