

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS ON LONGFELLOW BRIDGE OPTIONS
In Preparation for Discussion at the September 15th Task Force Meeting

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A. With Respect to the Bridge Cross-Section: From a transportation perspective, I believe that the key to consensus is combining asymmetry and convertibility in a manner that creates a more positive sum game: one in which vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian and transit advocates can get everything they need, but not necessarily everything they want – nor at all times or in all places. In the case of the bridge cross-section, and based on relevant traffic demand trends and the related design options outlined in the August 31st meeting – and assuming that my calculations are accurate -- the following type of hybrid approach seems to have potential to accomplish that pragmatic goal and achieve a working consensus:

- ❖ *Transit Reservation and Left-Side Should Widths Unchanged:* The 27 foot transit reservation and the adjacent 1' roadway shoulders would remain unchanged, since an increase in their widths is not a priority of the MBTA and would come at the cost of higher priorities for other modes.
- ❖ *A Dedicated Motor Vehicle Travel Lane in Each Direction:* There would be one 11 foot dedicated motor vehicle travel lane in each of the north-bound and south-bound directions.
- ❖ *A Convertible HOV Lane South-bound:* There would be one 12 foot convertible travel lane south-bound, which would be used for HOV and emergency vehicle travel during and between the AM and PM peak commuter periods. It would be available for bicycle and other non-motor-vehicle uses, as well as required emergency vehicle use, during most off-peak periods – e.g., evenings, weekends, holidays. This convertible HOV lane would be demarcated by distinctive signage, paving, coloring, grade changes and/or otherwise, as appropriate for such a convertible lane.
- ❖ *A Dedicated Bicycle Lane North-bound:* In addition to the convertible lane on the south-bound side, there would be a dedicated bicycle lane of 10 feet on the north-bound side of the bridge, separated from the vehicle travel lane by a 2 foot buffer. This should allow for safe and comfortable two-way travel and/or passing at all times; and it could be designed using the cycle-track principles outlined in the last meeting, allowing for vehicular or other uses in emergency situations or on special occasions.
- ❖ *Two Separated Sidewalks:* The above configuration would allow for sidewalks on both sides of the bridge of 15 feet in width, including railings and curbs. This would be a major improvement over the existing condition of 50% north-bound and 250% south-bound, which could be further improved based on the design of roadway curbs and street/sidewalk lights.

B. With Respect to the Bridge Connections in Boston and Cambridge: It is critically important that the bridge linkages at both the Boston and Cambridge ends of the bridge be included within the scope of the Task Force purview, and that those considerations should encompass improvements in both roadway and parkland connections.

The key to doing that in a timely and responsible manner is to rely primarily on the research and evaluation of existing proposals – e.g., those of the Esplanade Association, WalkBoston, MGH and others on the Boston side of the river -- and to distinguish those elements/variations of those proposals that could/should be done as part of Longfellow Bridge reconstruction from those that would be enhanced and facilitated by this project, but should be reserved for future consideration. In the case of the Esplanade Association proposal, for example -- which we strongly endorse, especially were it to include restoration and renewed use of the under-bridge pedestrian tunnel in the Esplanade:

- ❖ *Functional Linkages:* Implementation of Esplanade Association proposals for pedestrian bridge and greenway/pathway connections west of the Longfellow Bridge are quite clearly dependent on design accommodations that must be part of the reconstruction effort itself. They would also improve the design and function of Charles Circle from a transportation perspective; and they are arguably essential to supporting and sustaining the multi-modal transportation plans for the bridge itself, which will require comparably safe, adequate and efficient linkages to and from the bridge for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians alike. For those reasons, these elements of the Esplanade Association need to be done as part of Longfellow Bridge redesign and reconstruction process; and I believe that is a strategy that we would endorse.

On the other hand, proposed Esplanade Association improvements east of Longfellow Bridge, while also interesting and desirable, depend more on the evolving development strategies of other institutions – e.g., Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary; and those improvements would better be delayed unless and until required consultation and concurrence among all interested parties can be accomplished.

Political Linkages: While MHD should do everything that can only be done as part of the Longfellow Bridge reconstruction to extend the multi-modal strategies planned for the cross-section of the Longfellow Bridge as securely and seamlessly as possible into the fabric of the communities that it joins. But to that end, attention also needs to be paid to the related responsibilities of the cities of Boston and Cambridge to plan and implement corresponding improvements to community circulation patterns, both now and in the future.

For that reason, the Task Force should emphasize in our discussions, consensus and recommendations, that the Longfellow Bridge design and reconstruction process, particularly in the area of bridge/community transitions and connections and the redesign process should include a public and proactive collaboration with the cities of Boston and Cambridge and with other state agencies as well, in order to encourage planning and scheduling of complementary public projects that will leverage the significant benefits and share the significant burdens that MHD is undertaking with this project.

C. With Respect to Other Significant Design and Operation Considerations: While most of the attention above and in the Task Force discussions to date have primarily focused on transportation issues/opportunities, our final Task Force consensus and recommendations could/should address an number of other considerations of arguably equal importance:

- ❖ *Paving, Planting, Painting, Signage, Banners, Furniture:* These final design elements will be items that will have lasting implications for the public impression of the Longfellow Bridge itself, both as a functional example of contemporary infrastructure and as an important historic structure. These elements could/should also reflect and reinforce the community connections at either end of the bridge that were referenced above. Such aesthetic, civic and urban design considerations need more attention as part of the Task Force process and should be given due consideration in our final consensus and recommendations.
- ❖ *Lighting -- On, Of, Under and Within the Bridge:* While this is a consideration similar to those enumerated above, it is given separate mention because the design and siting of lighting equipment will directly affect the size, utility, comfort and convenience of the available surface space on the bridge, especially on the two sidewalks. If street/sidewalk lighting is properly designed and sited, it will not only enhance the beauty and elegance of the sidewalks, but it need not unduly diminish its size and utility. This applies to the design and siting of sidewalk curbs and signs as well.
- ❖ *Public Programming and Commercial Possibilities:* Given the additional multi-modal functionality of the bridge and the exceptional prominence, visibility and ambience of its location, there will be many new opportunities for public programming. These include the potential for significant revenue from appropriate advertising and sponsorship possibilities in connection with special events and a banner program that could enliven and enhance the bridge itself. Such revenue possibilities could have significant implications for the future maintenance of the Longfellow Bridge once its reconstruction is completed.
- ❖ *Governance Structures:* Consideration should also be given to establishing or expanding the kinds of participatory private marketing, programming and funding structures for the Longfellow Bridge that would supplement and support its public management, including assisting with maintenance and repair on a continuing basis. There are many existing and possible models for such complementary arrangements, which could/should be researched and discussed as part of the Task Force consensus and recommendations.

D. With Respect to Construction Costs and Related Construction Issues/Opportunities:

There are two matters of particular importance in this regard, which deserve mention at this point and arguably should be part of the Task Force consensus and recommendations:

- ❖ *Project Cost:* There needs to be more attention paid to the substantial cost of this project and its various elements. This matter has received virtually little attention in the Task Force process to date; and since our recommendations could be an important part of the public support for this project, costs and other construction issues that should be addressed and reflected in the Task Force discussion, consensus and recommendations.
- ❖ *Mitigation and Demonstration:* While it goes without saying that identifying and mitigating the disruptions involved in the actual Longfellow Bridge reconstruction process will be of primary concern to the impacted communities, the construction period also affords some opportunities to test traffic and other changes in behavior. Such opportunities could/should be discussed in advance and arguably could/should be referenced in the Task Force consensus and recommendations.