



February 18, 2021

Jennifer Norwood
Director of External Affairs and Partnerships
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Boston, MA 02114

RE: 25% design plans for Hammond Pond Parkway Beacon to Route 9

Dear Ms. Norwood:

The undersigned Newton City Councilors are elected from the Ward in Newton which is the site of the proposed changes to Hammond Pond Parkway north of Route Nine. We have deferred our comments until we had a chance to review the updated traffic study released late last week.

We applaud the idea of improving the safety of the Parkway and making it more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. The benefits include slowing speeding cars, providing safe pedestrian and bicycle travel well separated from the travel lane (a separation which might even be greater by a planted berm), and basically enhancing the “park” in the Parkway.

At the same time, this Parkway section will continue also to serve the largest shopping area in the region, The Chestnut Hill Mall and The Street; the largest condominium complex in the region, The Towers at Chestnut Hill; and the largest educational institution, Boston College. (We understand that the College is now relying on its facilities at 300 Hammond Pond Parkway to provide support for all its campuses in Newton and Boston, as well as new facilities on Heath Street in Brookline, including maintenance and heavy equipment for which the DCR granted unusual approval, as its Parkways have traditionally been reserved for non-commercial vehicles.) This situation will require especially careful design. (The traffic study indicated almost 18,500 cars a day on this roadway before the Pandemic and anticipates more than that by the end of the decade after reconstruction.)

For example, we believe that pedestrian safety would be enhanced by some crossing signalization at the major crosswalk south of the MBTA tracks, as well as careful review of how the major facilities are reached and used by pedestrians and cyclists, including benches and bike racks. Also, we believe it is important to clarify how the truck and other vehicles from Boston College facilities will use a narrower roadway so as to minimize adverse impacts. Finally, we think it is important to design the roadway to avoid backups that could cause traffic to be diverted to neighborhood streets nearby, like Hammond Street and Langley Road, which were not part of the traffic study. (For instance, the BSC Group traffic study indicated in Table 4 on page 36 that northbound peak hour delays would increase after reconstruction of the Beacon-Hammond intersection.) Perhaps some thought could be given to experimenting with different configurations and lane design before final construction begins to reach an optimal design for safety and ease of travel for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.

This proposal marks an important opportunity for both the City and the Commonwealth. Thank you for this opportunity to comment, and we look forward to the next phase of design of this important Parkway.

R. Lisle Baker
Ward Councilor, Ward 7

Rebecca W. Grossman
Councilor-at-Large, Ward 7

Marc Laredo
Councilor-at-Large, Ward 7

Cc: Newton City Council; Mayor Ruthanne Fuller; Ken Lyons, Chestnut Hill Association; Tom Keady, Boston College