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Cambridge City MA

Policy Order POR 2020 #243

That the City Council go on record in full support of the All-At-Grade Alternative as the Preferred Alternative in the next phase of state and federal environmental process and in urging MassDOT to further revise the All-At-Grade Alternative to narrow Soldiers Field road lanes to existing parkway standards and make other roadway modifications to maximize space for parkland and pathways in the throat area and to avoid intrusion into the Charles River,

Information

Department:	City Clerk's Office	Sponsors:	Councillor Patricia Nolan, Councillor Quinton Zondervan, Councillor Dennis J. Carlone, Councillor Jivan Sobrinho- Wheeler, Councillor Marc C. McGovern
Category:	Policy Order		

Attachments

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Body

- WHEREAS: The Allston Multimodal I-90 Project, managed by MassDOT, will transform road, railway, pathway, parkland, and shoreline of the Charles River; and
- WHEREAS: The Project will create a new neighborhood across the river from Cambridge and has the potential to provide great benefits, though it will increase traffic and noise for Cambridge during construction; and
- WHEREAS: The City Council on October 5, 2020, unanimously supported a policy order urging Secretary Pollack to consider a lane reduction and an at-grade design; and
- WHEREAS: MassDOT has presented three alternatives for the narrow area between Boston University and the river known as the “throat”; and
- WHEREAS: Cambridge previously supported the “Hybrid” alternative that would rebuild Soldiers Field Road on a viaduct but withdrew its support when MassDOT said the Hybrid would require building a “temporary” bridge far out into the Charles River to hold Soldiers Field Road and the Paul Dudley White Pathway for the 8-10 years of construction – a completely unacceptable intrusion; and
- WHEREAS: One of the three alternatives is the All-At-Grade Alternative which will align the Massachusetts Turnpike, Soldiers Field Road, the Worcester commuter rail line, the Grand Junction railroad, and the Paul Dudley White Path all at ground level; and
- WHEREAS: The All-At-Grade Alternative provides:
- For a quieter Cambridge and Magazine Beach Park (the 17-acre park across from “the throat,” Cambridge’s second largest park). Trucks will no longer need to jake break as they go up and down the elevated turnpike;
 - A rebuilt Grand Junction bridge over Soldiers Field Road that will make possible future transit and safe pathway for walkers and bikers on the Grand Junction

tracks from the new West Station to the river pathways and across the river to Kendall Square and beyond;

- A wider, safer, Paul Dudley White pathway for walkers and bikers, many of whom are going to or from Cambridge;
- Connections for walkers and bikers between neighborhoods and the river, including a generous ped/bike bridge from the Boston University area across the roads and railways to the river;
- Opportunities for future air rights development over the highways, whether of buildings, parkland, or other public use;
- Maximum flexibility to adjust the layout of roads, rails, and parkland to changes in commuting technology and patterns as increased use of public transport in the future lessens the need for asphalt;
- more opportunities for creative planting and other environmentally favorable design solutions; and
- vastly lower long-term maintenance and rebuilding costs than a rebuilt Turnpike viaduct; and

WHEREAS: The All-At-Grade Alternative has recently been revised and improved to be the only alternative that, for the first time, includes the restoration and recreation of a natural river shoreline, one of Cambridge's priorities for over five years; and

WHEREAS: The lanes of Soldiers Field Road in the All-At-Grade Alternative are shown by MassDOT as wider than now exist for this parkway, resulting in a small but significant intrusion of the roadway into the edge of the river; and

WHEREAS: MassDOT has set a deadline of October 30, 2020, for public comment on which of the three alternatives should be identified as the Preferred Alternative in the next phase of state and federal environmental process; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record in full support of the All-At-Grade Alternative as the Preferred Alternative in the next phase of state and federal environmental process and in urging MassDOT to further revise the All-At-Grade Alternative to narrow Soldiers Field road lanes to existing parkway standards and make other roadway modifications to maximize space for parkland and pathways in the throat area and to avoid intrusion into the Charles River; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to send a suitably engrossed copy of this Resolution to Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack on behalf of the entire City Council.

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