

Public Comments Submitted to the Boston Region MPO

April 28, 2022

Written comments were submitted for the following projects since the MPO meeting on March 31, 2022:

- **Belmont:** Community Path, Belmont Component of the MCRT (Phase 1) (#609204) (one letter, page 2)
- **Brookline:** Rehabilitation of Washington Street (#610932) (two letters, pages 3-4)
- **Swampscott:** Swampscott Rail Trail (#610666) (three letters, pages 5-11)

Belmont (#609204): Community Path, Belmont Component of the MCRT (Phase 1)

April 12, 2022

Dear Mr. Genova,

I am a long time resident of Belmont, and worked many years as crossing guard for the town. I have followed the slow progress of trying to shoe horn a bicycle path through Belmont, and attended many public meetings. I came away from these meetings feeling that the biking community is looking for a quick, direct route into town, costs and neighborhood impacts irrelevant. Even as an older resident I do see the benefits of a community path, but spending an upwards of 20+ million dollars on a "commuter" path with out even knowing if the next phase is possible seems preposterous.

I was dismayed by the recent presentation by Community Path chair Russ Leino, at the Board Of Selectmens meeting of April 4th and the discussion that followed. (I have included the link) Hearing; "Phase II is more complicated than phase I, it's very difficult, more complex, could turn into more money, huge challenges, constructibility of the route, if we don't do phase II it's a path to no where". These words make me wonder if phase I should be funded at this time, before we even know if it's feasible to complete phase II.

Town residents have heard for many years about a tunnel that would connect Concord Ave to Channing Road. 40 years later we are building a new high school complex that will include 7th and 8th grade students, and we still don't have a tunnel. A major safety issue and our children are being used as a political tools by individuals looking for a North side alignment, and continue to state it's the "only" and "safe" option.

I do hope the MPO, MBTA, and the individuals responsible for safety, are not fooled by the special interest groups lack of common sense.

Thank you for your time,

Frances Napoli
Belmont, Ma

29 March 2022

Via: Mr. Matt Genova
Transportation Improvement Program Manager
Central Transportation Planning Staff
mgenova@ctps.org

Dear Mr. Genova:

Please accept this letter in support of the continued inclusion of the Rehabilitation of Washington Street project on the FFYs 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Plan. This project is number 610932, and it is currently programmed for funding in FFY2027. This project had the broad backing of the Town of Brookline's entire elected delegation, as well as wide support of many, many stakeholders including members of the disability, bicycling, pedestrian, public transit, complete streets, Vision Zero, and driving constituencies.

Washington Street is a regionally significant corridor, connecting the Brighton and Mission Hill neighborhoods of Boston, as well as serving as the home of thousands of Brookline residents and small businesses. The Town of Brookline has recently engaged a community-directed Design Review Committee to work closely with all stakeholders to ensure that the project's milestones are met. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shonali Gaudino'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Shonali Gaudino

Brookline (#610932): Rehabilitation of Washington Street

April 1, 2022

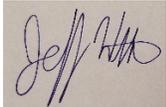
Via: Mr. Matt Genova
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Sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be "Jeff Wachter" written in a cursive style.

Jeff Wachter

411 Washington Street, Unit 6, Brookline, MA

Swampscott (#610660): Swampscott Rail Trail

April 25, 2022

Mr. David Mohler, Chair
Boston Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, Massachusetts
02116
c/o Matt Genova, mgenova@ctps.org

Re: Swampscott Rail Trail (project #610666)

Dear Mr. Mohler,

I write to you once again to implore you to deny Swampscott's request for funding for the rail trail. Since you denied this request last year, nothing of substance has changed. Indeed the town is now facing lawsuits on multiple fronts, at least one of which is related to the trail. If and when they move forward with eminent domain to take our land and destroy the greenery that is there now we are prepared with two law firms which are working in tandem.

They have done no environmental studies, engaged no arborists, nor have they looked at any alternatives to this plan, or even engaged an assessor to ascertain the fair value of our land. Contrary to the information they put forth to the public, they have never engaged us or followed through with talks. They remain secretive and bullying.

The idea that this will save on emissions is preposterous. The very few people who might use the trail to bring their children to school is offset many times over by essentially taking green space and making it a road. The amount of mature trees they have already taken down is staggering and the destruction on this one small street would be monumental. The parts of the trail that they have already built are fraught with flooding issues and erosion; so much so that we have heard they are considering paving sections of it. It becomes dangerous for walkers and bikers. The gravel runs down and winds up in the storm drains. Nearby stone walls that have been up for decades are crumbling. It is ironic that there is a handicap railing as the trail is pretty much inaccessible to handicapped persons by virtue of the broken and uneven sidewalks that lead up to it.

Instead of fixing the crumbling sidewalks in town and making access to businesses easier for pedestrians and bikers, they want to take private property purely for a small number's recreation. There are still many residents in town who believe that we do not own this land after all these years of disinformation.

I am attaching my letter of last year and some pictures of the conditions on a portion of the trail already built.

Sincerely,

Meryl Rose
82 Phillips Avenue
Swampscott





Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 17, 2021

Mr. David Mohler, Chair
Boston Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, Massachusetts
02116

Dear Mr. Mohler,

I am a longtime resident of Swampscott and my property includes a portion of that which is slated for the Rail Trail. I would like to make you aware of some of the issues that I and many of my neighbors are concerned about.

From the beginning, the citizens of Swampscott were led to believe that we do not own this land. This is not true, and in fact many of us have perfected our deeds to reflect that we do indeed own this land. This is still being misrepresented on the rail trail website, as well as the fact that we have not been part of the planning process as is stated there and has been stated at town meetings. The only contact we have had from the town has been after they planned the whole trail and this came in the form of threats of years of construction easements and generally making our lives miserable for years if we did not agree to gift our land to the town. We have concerns that have nothing to do with NIMBY issues, and everything to do with preservation of our properties' value and environmental concerns. The town has never studied the effects of the trail on the environment or our properties. They have refused to even procure appraisals for the inevitable eminent domain takings. This is something that we intend to fight as are our rights, and given that these takings generally are valued at 10-15% of a property's value, will certainly run into the millions for the town.

What may have seemed like a great idea in 1980 is not necessarily one in 2021. Global warming has changed things immeasurably. In the past few years I have lost five 100 foot plus trees on my property , one crushed our shed and another just missed our house. What the trail does in this area is to destroy mature, established trees and vegetation and it puts the remaining ones at great risk as well as our homes. It does not create green space, it destroys it. Once these trees and other vegetation are cut they cannot be put back. Every year we see more and more violent storms after which the streets, cars, and buildings are littered with limbs and debris. The town is actively trying to get donations of trees to mitigate the scores that have been lost.

This has never been studied or addressed by the trail proponents. They have silenced and vilified citizens who bring these issues up. They are plowing through without a thought as to the environmental impact, and without any concern for the many property owners who this impacts the most. Nor have they considered alternative routes that will not destroy greenery and

properties and will be infinitely less costly.

I urge you to reconsider your association with this project. Much of the green you see in the background in the first picture below will be gone forever. Same for most of my neighbors, many of whose homes are much closer and will be more devastatingly impacted. We would welcome and encourage your inspection of the site at any time.

I have sent you a hard copy of this letter which you should receive in a day or two.

Sincerely,

Meryl Rose
82 Phillips Avenue
Swampscott



Swampscott (#610660): Swampscott Rail Trail

April 26, 2022

David Mohler
Chair, Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
10 Park Plaza , Suite 2150
Boston MA 02116
c/o Matt Genova, mgenova@ctps.org

Dear Mr Mohler and Members of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization

As a concerned citizen of Swampscott, I write this e-mail asking that you please deny the towns request for TIP funding for the proposed Swampscott Rail Trail. The town has not yet acquired the land needed to construct the trail, the town does not have money needed to acquire the land needed to construct the trail, the town does not have approval from the Swampscott Conservation Commission to develop the trail, the town does not have approval from town meetings for the takings needed to build the trail and the town is currently being sued by National Grid for a "rail trail" taking made in 2019 that National Grid alleges was not authorized and not legal.

Beyond the above and quite possibly most serious of all is the fact that the town has improperly diverted state grant money to compensate landowners for eminent domain takings – which based on my understanding is expressly prohibited by the state.

I understand the town continues to ask for state funding for the proposed Swampscott Rail Trail but until the town is able to clear up the issues outlined above and below in more detail I believe there are other projects more deserving and more shovel ready for your grant money.

As you consider my request, I would ask you to please consider the following:

1. The town has not yet acquired the land rights needed to construct the trail and unfortunately any grant money you provide could and likely will be wasted.
2. In 2019 the town took land rights from National Grid for the land needed to build a portion of the trail and the town is currently being sued by National Grid for not following mass general law for a taking and for also acting outside of its authority as voted by Town Meeting/Referendum and attempted to take land rights without proper approval.
3. The town has inappropriately used Mass State Grant funding in the past to create a quid pro quo whereby grant money provided by the state to the town was used to compensate landowners for the taking of their land – which is not allowed under the grant.
4. In August 2019 the town presented a letter of intent to Swampscott's Conservation commission which was denied. In response to the request the Conservation Commission paid for a study of the rail trail plans/proposed project and as a result published a list of findings for the town to address. The town has not addressed any of the findings, they have not updated their plans and they have not yet resolved this issue and or gained approval from the Conservation Commission to proceed.
5. Town Leadership might tell you that the proposed Rail Trail will connect with our newly approved town wide elementary school and as such would be "essential" to the success of the project. This is not true, and the trail will not connect to the newly approved school and is not essential to the success of the project. In fact, the town of Swampscott has survived for its entire history without a rail trail and as such any statement that a rail trail is essential to the success of any school in town is hyperbole.
6. The town has not paid for appraisals needs for the eminent domain takings it would need to secure the land rights needed for the rail trail. They took land from National Grid with only \$100 dollars of compensation which National Grid deemed as essentially no compensation at all. Subsequently National Grid paid for an appraisal which valued their land at over 1MM far more money than the town has available for any eminent domain takings. Beyond the National Grid

takings there are over 80 town residents who own land that the town must acquire rights to for the trail and they have not yet paid for the requisite appraisals needed prior to such takings. In short, the town does not have the money and cannot prove they have the money needed to acquire the land needed to develop a trail.

Aside from the above items I want to point out that Town Leadership has not engaged abutters and town residents in a meaningful dialogue regarding this project. Specifically, they have ignored several very real and potential options to mitigate negative externalities associated with the trail and work amicably with neighbors.

In theory the rail trail could be a nice amenity for the Town of Swampscott but current town leadership has unfortunately made it their mission to implement a trail at all costs.

Your committee does a great job, and there are so many deserving projects. The answer to Swampscott should be no for now – until they can prove they are working with national grid, abutters and landowners – and actually have the needed rights and approvals to build the trail.

There is no emergency here – please just hold those you fund accountable to a certain standard of ethics and readiness – when the trail is ready, they can come back to you for consideration.

Thank you!

Tom Palleria

30 Stanwood Road

Swampscott MA 01907