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former Student Union Secretary

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7daze!

New look for Comm. Ave in the works
Nicholas Nikaj, *The Source*

When students get their first look at Boston University, the fast cars, dinging trolley, rusting fence and busy intersections of Commonwealth Avenue seem daunting, almost scary. All this is about to change.

Three years ago, a public hearing was held to present a plan for the stretch of Commonwealth Avenue between Kenmore Square and the BU Bridge. Kenmore Square residents, BU representatives and Pedestrian advocacy groups attended the meeting, where several people voiced concerns over biking safety and Red Sox traffic.

According to the plan outlined in July of 2002, the number of lanes on Commonwealth Avenue would be lessened and sidewalks would be expanded. The outside lanes of both the eastbound and westbound sides of the street would be expanded to make room for bikers, but there would be no "Share the Road" signs.

"One of the problems is that there are no designated bike lane," said Jeff Rosenblum, an environmental engineer and Executive Director of the Livable Streets Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to developing methods of travel that improve urban life in Boston.

"When this project got started in 1997, maybe they didn't include bike lanes," Rosenblum said, "but between whenever they started and the present, they should have updated their thinking on this, which they haven't done."

"Current practice for urban areas suggest that helping narrower car lanes slow down traffic," Rosenblum said, "Having a bike lane helps slow down traffic and helps give cyclist more of a place."

Rosenblum said his organization and others like his would have liked to have more input into the plans, but between the last hearing in 2002 and the announcement of the finalized plans by the Boston Globe, advocacy groups have not been involved.

To counteract this, Rosenblum said that as soon as the article

"Having a bike lane helps slow down traffic and helps give cyclist more of a place."

concerning the redesign was published in the Globe, he contacted different advocacy groups to organize and come up with a response.

"I've set up meetings, talked to them about the project, gotten input for them, talked about what they think, and am putting together a letter to ask for a meeting with our collective alliance folks to talk about what can be done at this stage," Rosenblum said.

While most students have not yet heard about the changes, some are excited about the prospect of a more pedestrian-friendly street.

"Boston is known for being a pretty bike-unfriendly city," said Katherine Bruce, COM '07, "so any sort of accommodations made on the roads are a really good thing."

Dan Furlong, COM '07, said he welcomes the prospect of a "prettier Commonwealth Avenue".

"I especially find the trolley unattractive, so any change to that has to be good," Furlong said.

The new plan currently includes and expansion of the sidewalks on both sides of the boulevard, a preservation of existing trees and the addition of several more, as well as landscaping on the sidewalks and in the center of the street where the trolleys run.

Rosenblum says he is "encouraged that there is opportunity" for improvement in the plan. "Overall it's a great project," he said. "I just think that the advocacy groups are undervalued in their collaborative contribution."

"It really would be a shame to build something that isn't as good as it can be," he said.

Sources at the Office of Transportation Planning and the Boston Transportation Department were unable to comment.

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