

January 2010

Dear Park Commissioners:

LivableStreets Alliance supports the proposal to allow bicycling on appropriate paved paths in Franklin Park. Changing the rules would, in reality, bring official policy more in line with what the public already does and, as expressed in its actions, clearly wants.

We also fully support the idea of increasing the bike parking facilities at Franklin Park (and at other parks and playgrounds) to encourage people to travel to and from the park by bike instead of by car.

Given the nature of Franklin Park paths – curving, hilly, and in a loop – people tend to move slowly, often accompanied by children, and often simply getting some low-key exercise while enjoying the scenery and each other's company. We do not expect there to be much contention over the shared path space, especially since the most-used path, the Golf Course Loop, is as wide as a two lane road. (Hurrying bike commuters tend to use the roads, which run in a straighter and more efficient line across the Park.) However, to further reduce possible confusion, we'd suggest that there be good signage indicating where cyclists should, and should not, go. The chosen paths should clearly not detract from the rendered landscape. Rather they should provide unanimous improvements in safety and landscaping.

Still, we hope that in the future the Park Commission can explore the feasibility of widening some of the narrower paths to 12 feet or even more so that there is even more room for increased use by walkers, joggers, and cyclists.

Physical activity is increasingly recognized as vital to personal and public health. And bicycling is also an important component of our future transportation system as well as part of the solution of our growing climate change crisis. Perhaps the park could annually schedule four or five "car free days" for the entire Park (and perhaps for other parks as well) as is already done in Central and Prospect Parks in NYC.

We urge you consult with Boston's Bike Program Director and then take speedy and favorable action on this issue.

Sincerely,

Steven E. Miller, Board Member, LivableStreets Alliance