

DCR to solicit bids to repair the BU Bridge

Scott Wachtler

This fall The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will begin soliciting bids to repair and rehabilitate the 80-year-old Boston University Bridge which crosses the Charles River between Boston and Cambridge.

The bridge, which carries an estimated 41,000 vehicles a day, is in need of a total deck replacement and is expected to take about three years to complete. DCR estimates the project will cost roughly \$20 million.

"We will replace the road bed in three stages," Wendy Fox, spokesperson for DCR said. "We will do a third of the deck at a time so you'll always have at least one lane of traffic in each direction going across."

Fox said the arches and the underlying beams are structurally sound and in good shape and will not need to be replaced.

"If we thought it weren't safe we would close [the bridge]," Fox said.

DCR's contractor, Unified Contractor Inc. of Melrose, is currently conducting a \$2.3 million repair of the sidewalks along both sides of the bridge.

On Oct 16, DCR held a public meeting at BU's College of General Studies building to discuss the agency's plans to rehabilitate the bridge. Over 80 Residents from Cambridge, Brookline and Boston attended the meeting.

"DCR will work closely with neighbors, commuters, and other stakeholders in the area of the bridge to ensure traffic moves as smoothly and safely as possible and disruptions are minimized during the construction project," said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr.

According to Fox, one of the major comments from residents was to make sure the newly repaired bridge could safely accommodate pedestrians and bicycle traffic.

"We will absolutely look into what we can do about accommodating more bicycle and pedestrian traffic," Fox said.

Fox also said people had concerns about improving sightlines and traffic patterns particularly on the Cambridge side of the bridge.

While under repair, Fox said DCR will detour traffic and make sure traffic runs as smoothly as possible.

"We have appreciated the effectiveness of DCR in limiting, as much as possible, the inconveniences due to the current construction project on the bridge sidewalks," said State Senator Anthony Petrucci. "We expect that DCR will take similarly appropriate measures to further the safety and traffic efficiency during the bridge rehabilitation."

State Senator Steven Tolman calls the BU Bridge a critical piece of infrastructure to the area and said its rehabilitation and continued use will be a part of this neighborhood's future.

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