

11 December 2007

Frank Tramontozzi, P.E.  
Chief Engineer  
Massachusetts Highway Department  
10 Park Plaza  
Boston, MA 02116-3973

Dear Mr. Tramontozzi:

LivableStreets appreciates the opportunity to comment on the **Magoun Square Project** in Somerville (Project File No. 603968).

Based on the project diagrams and drawings shown at the December 3 public meeting, we think that this project has the potential to provide a number of much needed improvements to the area, most importantly regarding pedestrian and bicyclist safety. In our opinion, the current plan is off to a good start. However, there are a few requests we would like to make to ensure the maximum benefit is achieved.

First, we strongly suggest that bike lanes be provided on Broadway. Broadway is a vital east-west connection through Somerville, with Magoun Square being a key piece. There is already a plan in place to put bike lanes the eastern section of Broadway through East Somerville, contributing to the ultimate goal of having bike lanes along the entire corridor.

The bike lanes through Magoun Square should extend through the entire east-west length of the project area, going up to intersections from each direction and continuing directly after, and should be between the through travel lanes and any right turn only lanes at intersections. LivableStreets Alliance has conducted measurements of Broadway from Teele Square to Winter Hill and beyond. According to these measurements, it should be possible to add bike lanes without needing to remove travel lanes or parking. If removal of the median and/or general travel lanes is needed to include bike lanes, we think that this should be done because of the importance of this square as a bike connection.

As an example of a similar project of limited scope, we point to Porter Square in Cambridge. Bike lanes were added through Porter Square through narrowing of travel lanes and removal of median in some locations because of the importance of the bicycle connections it provides, despite the fact that Mass Ave on either end of the square does not (yet) have bike lanes.

Both Mayor Curtatone and the Somerville Bicycle Committee have set forth ambitious goals of expanding the bike lane network throughout Somerville. To omit them from this project would be a large misstep, in our opinion.

Second, we would like to ensure that the pedestrian crossing experience is optimal. The sidewalk curb extensions and new crossing signals will be a great improvement over the current conditions. We were told at the public meeting that the crossing signals would most likely be concurrently timed. We agree that this is the preferred timing, as it reduces the amount of time pedestrians must wait to cross the street. Ideally, these concurrent pedestrian phases should be built into the light cycle, as pedestrians are unlikely to press a button in order to receive a walk signal. Finally, we would like to suggest that pedestrian wait times be reduced to 30 seconds or less for crossing in each direction. This has been shown to be an optimal time for which pedestrians will wait before attempting to jaywalk.

Thank you for considering our suggestions. We are continuing to look at Broadway and Magoun Square in a larger context, and will be submitting more detailed comments at a future date. Please feel free to contact me to discuss any of our comments in greater detail. My cell phone number is 413-478-9058 and my e-mail address is [cdenison@comcast.net](mailto:cdenison@comcast.net).

Sincerely,



Charles Denison  
Board of Directors  
LivableStreets Alliance