

# LivableStreets Rethinking urban transportation

e-bulletin #11

March 3, 2006

## Greetings!

Click here to view this ebulletin [as a printable PDF](#).

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Reminder: We are now **LivableStreets Alliance**, advocates for a comprehensive transportation network that improves the quality of urban life in Boston. The Boston Bicycle Planning Initiative is now a project of LivableStreets. We formed this organization with the belief that advocacy for better transportation is more successful when framed terms of improving quality of life. It's not just about better subway service, more bike lanes or pedestrian friendly intersections? it's about bringing all the different pieces together to create more livable streets.

**Success!** Over 100 participated in the first 2 (of 4) Citizens' Forums co-sponsored by LivableStreets and the Museum of Science! [Click here for more information.](#)

**LivableStreets is a not-for-profit 501(c)3. Consider making a [tax-deductible contribution](#) to help us in our work!**

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**JOIN US FOR STREET TALK: LESSONS FROM PORTLAND, OR**

VOICE

## IS CITY TRAFFIC KILLING YOUR LOVE LIFE?

By Sarah Ferguson  
 February 14, 2006

Ever wonder why, in such a crowded place as New York City, it can be so hard to find a mate?

Here's a novel excuse: traffic.

According to a new study by the advocacy group Transportation Alternatives, people who live on highly trafficked streets tend to go out less and have fewer friends and acquaintances than people who live in less congested parts of the city.

Cities like London, Copenhagen, Bogot?, and Seoul have made dramatic moves to transform themselves into more ecologically sustainable, pedestrian-friendly places. Paris now closes a portion of one of its busiest expressways along the Seine each summer and transforms it into a public beach.



**street talk**  
Lessons from Portland, OR

click for details...

**Thursday March 9 at 7 o'clock**  
**Sherman Café, Union Square**

Sponsored by:

**LivableStreets**

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In post Big Dig Boston, an atmosphere of shell-shock looms. After the 15-year focus on automobiles, Bostonians are asking "what about the rest of us?" To retain its status as a

world-class city, Boston's vision of connectivity is behind-the-times. To look forward, one simply needs to look westward, to the example set by Portland, Oregon.

A conscious decision was made in Portland years ago to think differently about how people travel within a city. The resulting focus on equitable transportation, greenspace and context sensitive design has made Portland a shining example of progressive development policy. Phil Goff, LivableStreets Board member and former activist and planner behind some of Portland's efforts, will show slides and discuss his experience getting city officials to rethink the streets. One successful project Phil orchestrated is the "Morrison Bridge Campaign", which succeeded in bringing \$1.5 million in federal money to transform a bridge nearly inaccessible to pedestrians and cyclists to one with a broad esplanade on one side.

Please join us at 7pm on Thursday, March 9th at the Sherman Caf? in Union Square to hear more about how Portland's successes can influence Boston's future. The event is free. Unique chocolate beverages will be available at the caf? from Taza Chocolate.

[Click here for more information](#)

## **DISAPPOINTING LOSS: DOUG FOY, STATE'S SMART GROWTH CHAMPION, STEPS DOWN**

The staff and board of directors of LivableStreets Alliance, along with countless other advocates, are disappointed at the loss of Doug Foy at the helm of a newly created state agency called the Office of Commonwealth Development, designed to better connect transportation, housing, and environment policy. In December 2002, Massachusetts Governor-Elect Mitt Romney raised eyebrows when he appointed Foy to this newly created cabinet-level post. Many assumed that Romney, a "pro-business" Republican, and Foy, a prominent conservationist, would make a poor match. But environmental advocates long held out hope that the persuasive Foy could coax the governor to be as green as



Philadelphia and Chicago are both doing more to reorient their streets toward people and away from cars, organizers maintain.

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[Click here for the full article.](#)

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[Museum of Science Forum](#)

[Forum is an experimental program in engaging members of the public in conversations about the impact of science and technology on the individual, society, and the environment.](#)

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he initially appeared.

"This is like turning a supertanker," Foy said in a recent interview with the Boston Globe. "We have 50 years of terrible zoning practice in this state... you're not going to turn that around overnight." Though he claims that, "some of the most important changes that happen are subterranean," many of the signs on the surface were not good. Philip Warburg, Foy's successor at the Conservation Law Foundation, said in an article in the Globe that though Foy set ambitious goals with the Climate Protection Plan, the state has "come up with next to nothing by way of concrete actions to achieve those targets." "This reveals serious shortcomings in the Romney administration's commitment to addressing very real and pressing environmental concerns," Warburg was quoted as saying. [[Boston Globe; February 25, 2006](#)]

Foy has always been a champion of the city. "I love the city. I like not having to drive everywhere; everything is accessible by public transit or foot or bike. I like being able to get anything I need within walking distance. Cities are vibrant, exciting places. I once wrote a piece on cities about how if I had to do it again, I would raise my children in a city." [Boston Globe Magazine; March 25, 2001]

Foy, a former Olympic rower, spent 25 years heading the Conservation Law Foundation before becoming secretary of the Office of Commonwealth Development in January 2003.

[Click here for more information](#)

## CONCERNS ABOUT PROPOSED COMM AVE RECONSTRUCTION



In February, LivableStreets Alliance submitted a letter to the Commonwealth, City of Boston, and Boston University expressing concerns with the current design plans for the reconstruction of the stretch of Commonwealth

Avenue between the BU Bridge and Kenmore Square. Advocates were not invited to participate in the design process after the public hearing held almost 4 years ago and were not aware that the project had restarted from a stalled status.

LivableStreets reviewed the design drawings in collaboration with [Walkboston](#), [Adaptive Environments](#) (advocates for universal design), and the [Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition](#).

**Key issues:** (1) Narrow width and choice of surface material of sidewalks at certain locations; roadway and

sidewalk grading; and design of street corners and driveway aprons. (2) Unsafe and awkward design of many of the ramps, crosswalks, and islands. (3) Lack of a designated marked space for bicyclists and lack of attention to transitions for cyclists into and out of the project boundaries and movements at key intersections. (4) Signal timing issues including excessive pedestrian wait times, lack of signal prioritization for trolleys and buses, and relationship of synchronized vehicle signals with overall traffic speed. (5) Elimination of a significant number of existing trees.

[Click here for a copy of the February 27, 2006 letter.](#)

[Click here to read the January 1, 2006 article in the Boston Globe.](#)

[Click here to read the January 26, 2006 article in the BU Source](#)

[Click here for more information](#)

## STORROW DRIVE TO TAKE OVER ESPLANADE?



**Issue:** The State has proposed diverting traffic onto the Esplanade parkland during reconstruction of a Storrow Drive tunnel that is in need of repair.

### **LivableStreets position:**

We do not support the use of any part of the Esplanade parkland for motorized traffic under any circumstances. Alternative plans for rerouting traffic must be utilized.

**Numbers:** On a typical weekday morning during warm weather, over 200 people per hour use this park for walking, running, rollerblading, biking, wheelchair, and other recreation, health, and wellness activities. (Data from CTPS taken on May 10 and 11, 2005).



VIDEO

**DCR Options:** (1) Repair and maintain the existing tunnel; (2) Rebuild an identical tunnel and roadway system, (3) Demolish the tunnel and construct a parkway with traffic lights and crosswalks, (4) Build tunnels in both directions, putting all traffic under ground.

[Click to view DCR presentation online.](#)

**Some history:** One of the most regretted decisions concerning the Charles was on the fate of the Esplanade. The Esplanade, made possible by Helen Storrow's donation of \$1 million, used to include the land that is now

Storrow Drive. "The issue was lively and divisive," writes Haglund, "the most protracted and public fight since the advent of auto traffic." Drafts for a highway along the Charles went back to the 1920s, but the plan for the Esplanade approved by the legislature in 1929 "provided that no portion of the new park should be used for roadway construction . . ." The Storrow Memorial Embankment was opened in 1935, giving direct access from Back Bay and the West End to the park along the river. When a movement to build a river highway reemerged in the late 1940s, a group of Boston residents organized an Embankment Protective Association (its members included Arthur Fiedler and BU President Daniel Marsh.) The bill to construct Storrow Drive was defeated in the legislature by just eight votes in 1948. "But the defeat was short-lived," writes Haglund. "Two weeks later, the doors of the house chamber were locked. Then the house provided for the required three readings of the bill by adjourning twice and then reconvening. The roadway was passed by one vote, resulting in the construction of what is now Storrow Drive." *Heavily based on Winter 2002 article in Bostonia, BU's Alumni Quarterly; Also see: Inventing the Charles River, by Karl Haglund, MIT Press, 2002.*

[Click here for more information.](#)

### **FUNDS LIKELY FOR GREEN LINE EXTENSION TO SOMERVILLE**

Though unconfirmed, LivableStreets has learned that the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the gateway for approving all transportation spending in the region, plans on pulling the [Silver Line Phase 3](#) (a controversial tunnel connecting the two existing lines) from the Federal "[New Starts](#)" capital investment program, putting the Green Line Extension to Somerville and Medford in its place. This is the first step in obtaining the funding necessary to make this project happen.



[Click here for a 10-minute documentary on the Green Line Extension.](#)

[Click for more information.](#)

### **ARLINGTON DWELLERS WANT YEAR ROUND ACCESS TO MINUTEMAN PATH**

The [Clear the Trail Initiative](#) launched its official website last week. Dedicated to the goal of year- round access for all users of the Minuteman Trail, Clear the Trail Initiative had a guest editorial in the March 2 edition of the Arlington Advocate:



We live in an age of obesity, where pushing a shopping cart around the ubermarket once a week is considered regular exercise. Parents drive their kids to schools six blocks from home. People drive to the gym to ride stationary bicycles.

Enter multi-use trails. These converted railroad beds have gotten communities back walking, cycling, inline skating, interacting. Sadly, in many communities, Town Managers refuse to maintain these trails year round. The result is a trail that is unusable for months out of the year.

Such is the case with Arlington's Minuteman Trail. Despite overwhelming demand for winter trail use by all trail users, the Town of Arlington keeps trotting out the same old reasons to let the trail ice over. Several active partners both within Arlington and without have joined to galvanize and mobilize trail users to get Arlington to plow the Minuteman Trail.

[Click for more information](#)

## LIVABLESTREETS BOARD MEMBER KEN KRUCKEMEYER TO RECEIVE AWARD AT WALKBOSTON ANNUAL CELEBRATION

**THURSDAY MARCH 30**

### 4:00pm Rose Kennedy Greenway Walk

Walk with us along the finished and unfinished Greenway. We'll look at area history, development parcels, sidewalks, traffic calming and areas in need of pedestrian improvements.



### 5:30 Eat | Drink | Schmooze Annual Meeting 2006!

Golden Shoe Award Presentation:

- \* Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office
- \* South Cove Community Health Center
- \* Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center
- \* Chris Hart | Adaptive Environments
- \* Ken Kruckemeyer | Transportation Strategist

Speaker | Barnaby Evans  
WaterFire Providence, Creator & Artist

### Location:

60 State Street | 26th Floor | WILMERHALE  
Suggested contribution \$15  
RSVP by March 23 | 617.367.9255 or [info@walkboston.org](mailto:info@walkboston.org)

[Click for more information](#)

## WHAT'S GOING ON? CALENDAR!



**LivableStreets** maintain a comprehensive calendar of events, activities, and public meetings around issues dealing with urban transportation in Boston. Check it out-- keep your finger on the pulse. [Click here for the calendar.](#)

### HIGHLIGHTS:

Sat Mar 4: MassBike Charles River path cleanup day! 10-2pm, Herter Park, Allston. [\[more info\]](#)

Sat Mar 4 & Sun Mar 5: BikesNotBombs load bikes for shipment to New Orleans. Mississippi's, Roxbury. [\[more info\]](#)

Tue Mar 7: New Charles River Basin Citizens Advisory Committee. Demand that the bike and pedestrian bridges be built! 4-6pm, Boston. [\[more info\]](#)

Thu Mar 9: LivableStreets STREET TALK-- "Livable Streets for Boston: Lessons from Portland, OR". Presentation by Phil Goff. 7-9pm. Sherman Cafe, Union Square, Somerville. [\[more info\]](#)

Fri Mar 10: MoveMass-- "Zoning and Smart Growth: Transforming a stimulus to sprawl into a catalyst for well-managed growth". Presentation by Kristina Egan, Director, Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance. 8-9:30am. Boston. [\[more info\]](#)

Fri Mar 10: AltWheels planning meeting. "The largest alternative transportation festival on the East coast." 8-10am. Boston. [\[more info\]](#)

Fri-Sun Mar 10-12: Boston Bicycle Show. Cyclorama, Boston. [\[more info\]](#)

Sat Mar 11: Allston/Brighton citizens transportation visioning session. "How would you improve conditions for transit users, drivers, delivery personnel, cyclists, and pedestrians in the neighborhood?" 10am-1pm. Allston. [\[more info\]](#)

Sat Mar 25: "EJ in the hood" Environmental Justice conference, hosted by Alternatives for Community and Environment. "Unite and act to make change." 9am-4pm. South End, Boston. [\[more info\]](#)

Sun Mar 26: HubOnWheels community bike ride, first in 2006! Enlarging the Emerald Necklace? We'll trace Olmsted's proposed extension of the Emerald Necklace from Franklin Park to South Boston, then ride south around the edge of the city on the Neponset Greenway on its existing and proposed route. 10am. Franklin Park, Boston. [\[more info\]](#)

Wed Mar 28: MassINC Forum-- "Growth and Development in Massachusetts." Keynote address by author and

development expert Joel Kotkin. 8-9:30am. Boston. [\[more info\]](#)

Thu Mar 30: WalkBoston annual meeting! 4pm Rose Kennedy Greenway walk, 5:30pm Eat, Drink, Shmooze! Boston. [\[more info\]](#)

Fri Mar 31: LivableStreets and Museum of Science Citizens' Forum-- "Rethinking Urban Transportation." 5:30-8:30pm. Museum of Science, Boston. [\[more info\]](#)

[Click here to see more events.](#)

[Click here for the full calendar.](#)

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