



Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack
Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116

CC: Representative Jay Livingstone
CC: Chris Osgood, Chief of Street, City of Boston

RE: Longfellow Bridge Modified Phase 2 Construction

Dear Secretary,

On behalf of our members, the Boston Cyclists Union, the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition and LivableStreets Alliance would like to bring to your attention the increasingly hazardous conditions for people riding bicycles over the Longfellow Bridge, and we request that these hazards be addressed immediately.

Recently, due to the need to construct a temporary track for the Red Line, the inbound travel lane and bike lane have both been narrowed, and outbound cyclists no longer have a street-level contraflow bike lane and instead are being required to walk their bicycles on the sidewalk.

The current accommodations for the hundreds of people on bicycles* crossing the bridge daily are unacceptable to us and our members. The bike and travel lane widths heading inbound into Boston do not adequately provide a safe way for motorized vehicles to overtake people riding bicycles in the bike lane. Trolley buses, trucks and other large vehicles regularly travel in the bike lane, putting people riding bicycles at extreme risk of being side-swiped or struck from behind. Construction activities also routinely negatively impact the roadway condition with gravel and debris, and cones and markers are often moved into the path designated as the bike lane. (Please see the image attached below of current conditions heading inbound. Notice the bike lane is blocked by jersey barriers, forcing people riding bicycles into the travel lane.) Moreover, instructing outbound cyclists to walk their bikes on the sidewalk does not fulfill MassDOT's promise to provide two-way bike travel for the duration of the project.

From what we understand, this situation is temporary and two-way bicycle travel will switch to the upstream side of the bridge sometime early next year, but that does not make the current situation permissible to the hundreds of people biking over the Longfellow everyday. Moreover, we are concerned that the project will not follow the anticipated project schedule, and the

current situation will persist throughout the winter. If that is the case, snow accumulation in the inbound bike lane will force people riding bikes into the travel lane with vehicular traffic, making an already dangerous situation even worse. We have provided a video, attached, demonstrating the approach of a trolley bus to a cyclist in the bike lane. Please note the bus's right wheels overlapping with the bike lane, and the closeness during the pass.

We look forward to hearing how MassDOT plans to address these hazards.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wolfson, Interim Executive Director, Boston Cyclists Union
Richard Fries, Executive Director, MassBike
Charlie Denison, Advocacy Committee Chair, LivableStreets Alliance

* On Tuesday, Dec. 8 the Boston Cyclists Union conducted a count of users on the Longfellow Bridge and observed 333 people riding bicycles and 713 motorized vehicles going inbound between 7:35 AM and 9:15 AM. The fact that people riding bicycles represent approximately 32% of the rush-hour inbound vehicle traffic on the Longfellow Bridge demonstrate how important of a connection the bridge is for people riding bicycles between Cambridge and Boston.



Below is the current conditions (as of Dec. 11, 2015) heading inbound on the Longfellow Bridge. Please note the bike lane is blocked by jersey barriers, forcing people riding bikes to merge into the travel lane.

This is a link to a video of conditions as of the week of December 4th:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tu-6_nVDjno