

# Marty Sender Trail and Riverside Greenway Updates

By Ted Chapman, Riverside Greenway Working Group, Project Manager

The Marty Sender Greenway runs from Commonwealth Avenue along the Charles River to “The Cove” in Auburndale Park, and then to the Waltham Border and the Flowed Meadow trails. A part of the Blue Heron Trail, the greenway is one of the most heavily used and accessible recreational trails in Newton. This 3,370-foot-long trail is getting a face lift to improve accessibility and deal with seasonal flooding issues. The renovation is a 3-part process orchestrated by the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department.

- Phase 1 (0.2 miles) from the Club House at the Cove to the pump house near the Chaske Avenue entrance was completed this spring using the City of Newton’s Community Development Block Grant funding. The source of CDBG funds is an annual grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to “provide decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.” Newton uses part of its block grant to improve accessibility on projects approved by the Commission on Disability.

The existing trail was resurfaced to, not only meet, but to exceed ADA requirements — highly visible, white stabilized-stone dust (stone dust with a psyllium binder) with tactile borders of river rock improves the safety for visually impaired users. This treatment was also extended to improve access to the four benches overlooking the river.

- Phase 2 (0.25 miles) will extend from the trailhead on Commonwealth Avenue to the pump house. Funding is from a MassTrails grant (\$530,000), with Newton Conservators and the non-profit Solomon Foundation contributing matching funds of \$10,000 each. The restoration will continue the resurfacing treatment in Part 1 and will highlight a 500-foot-long boardwalk over a frequently

flooded section at the base of Lyons Field. The soil under this structure will be regraded to allow for significant wetland restoration, including the introduction of native wetland plants and the removal of invasive species. The final design work is in process, with construction work scheduled for the Spring of 2023.

- Phase 3 from The Cove to the Waltham border will be next. Preliminary planning is underway.

The Spring of 2023 will be a momentous time for other components of the Riverside Greenway.



1. The pedestrian bridge at the Lasell boathouse between Pigeon Hill Park and the DCR trail around the MWRA to Recreation Road and Riverside Park site is scheduled for replacement by MassDOT at a cost of \$3.7 million.

2. The Commonwealth Avenue Bridge over the Charles will be replaced with the inclusion of a shared-use path connecting to Norumbega Road and future improvements along Rt. 30 in Weston. This MassDOT bridge replacement will take two to three years to complete at a cost of \$21.8 million.

3. This new shared-use path will connect directly to the new Commonwealth Avenue Greenway from the new roundabout at Auburn Street to Lyons Field. Two lanes of the existing Commonwealth Avenue configuration will be converted to separated bike and pedestrian paths that will join the Marty Sender Path at Lyons Field. The 25% design of this segment was paid for by the City of Newton and will be built by MassDOT at a cost of \$7.7 million, with construction to start in 2023.

4. These million-dollar sums are dwarfed by the Newton Weston bridge replacement at I-90/I-95, a four-year, \$351 million project to start in 2023. The construction of the Mass Pike (I-90) in the 1960s cut off the Pigeon Hill neighborhood from the Charles River. The Pigeon Hill Road is an historic landmark that connected the

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Auburndale neighborhood of Pigeon Hill to the parkland and extensive recreational facilities along the Charles River that existed in the later 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. That roadbed passes under I-90; the Newton-Weston I-90 Bridge Project is an opportunity to reconnect the Pigeon Hill neighborhood to the Pigeon Hill Park with a shared-use trail.

The Riverside Greenway Working Group (RGWG) completed a Pigeon Hill Trail 25% design using Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines — (maximum grade 8.33%) in June 2020. MassDOT will use a design-build contract to complete I-90 Bridge project providing an opportunity to include the Pigeon Hill Trail (est. \$700,000) in the scope of the larger project. Newton’s state legislative contingent, Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, the Newton City Council, bike-pedestrian advocates, and Pigeon Hill neighbors have written letters to the Secretary of MassDOT Jamey Tesler and DCR Commissioner Doug Rice requesting the design-build team be given explicit permission and funding to build the Pigeon Hill Trail.

This united voice of advocacy has a high potential to succeed because the design-build approach being used by Mass DOT allows the already-approved 25% design to be modified by the engineering firm chosen to complete

the final design and coordinate construction with the aim of increasing efficiency, reducing costs, and incorporating community benefits. The Somerville Community Path included in the MBTA Green Line extension is an example of a project added based on its significant community benefits.

The remaining components of the Riverside Greenway extending from Riverside Park to the Riverside MBTA station, the Leo J. Martin golf/cross-country facilities, Lower Falls, and beyond are part of a \$3 million package to be funded by Mark Development. Mark Development just informed the community that their work on Riverside is on hold, given the challenge of finding funding in the current economic environment. When or if work on Riverside will continue is to be determined.

In the interim, the Riverside Greenway Working Group, with its fiscal sponsor The Newton Conservators, will pursue MassTrails Funding to move these remaining projects forward in coordination with MassDOT, DCR, and the City of Newton. With more than \$380 million dollars being spent on transportation improvements near the banks of the Charles River in Newton, the time is right to complete the vision of Riverside Greenway articulated in the 1975 Charles River Pathway Plan. ♦