

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs ■ MEPA Office

ENF Environmental Notification Form

For Office Use Only
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

EOEA No.: 14269
 MEPA Analyst: Wick Zanolis
 Phone: 617-626- X1030

The information requested on this form must be completed to begin MEPA Review in accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, 301 CMR 11.00.

Project Name: Commonwealth Avenue Phase 3 Landscape Improvements		
Street: Commonwealth Avenue from 330' west of Grant Ave to Approximately 525' west of the Boston City Line		
Municipality: City of Newton	Watershed: Charles River	
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: NAD 1983 Begin Project: N 898478.9329 E 225833.8471 End Project: N 898825.7156 E 227311.3360	Latitude: Begin: 42°20'11" N End: 42°20'22" N"	Longitude: Begin: 71°11'11" W End: 71°10'07" W
Estimated commencement date: Spring 2009	Estimated completion date: Fall 2011	
Approximate cost: \$8.9 Million	Status of project design: 100% complete	
Proponent: City of Newton		
Street: 1000 Commonwealth Avenue		
Municipality: Newton	State: MA	Zip Code: 02159
Name of Contact Person From Whom Copies of this ENF May Be Obtained: Catherine Rilla		
Firm/Agency: MassHighway	Street: 10 Park Plaza, Room 4260	
Municipality: Boston	State: MA	Zip Code: 02116
Phone: (617) 973-7882	Fax: (617) 973-8879	E-mail: catherine.rilla@mhd.state.ma.us

Does this project meet or exceed a mandatory EIR threshold (see 301 CMR 11.03)?
 Yes No

Has this project been filed with MEPA before?
 Yes (EOEA No. 11175- This project was Phase IV of the Commonwealth Avenue reconstruction project which included work from Walnut St. to the Boston City Line. Project limits were reduced to include work to Grant Avenue) No

Has any project on this site been filed with MEPA before?
 Yes (EOEA No. _____) No

Is this an Expanded ENF (see 301 CMR 11.05(7)) requesting:
 a Single EIR? (see 301 CMR 11.06(8)) Yes No
 a Special Review Procedure? (see 301CMR 11.09) Yes No
 a Waiver of mandatory EIR? (see 301 CMR 11.11) Yes No
 a Phase I Waiver? (see 301 CMR 11.11) Yes No

Identify any financial assistance or land transfer from an agency of the Commonwealth, including the agency name and the amount of funding or land area (in acres): The Massachusetts Highway Department is funding 20% and the Federal Highway Administration is funding 80% of the construction costs.

Are you requesting coordinated review with any other federal, state, regional, or local agency?
 Yes (Specify _____) No

List Local or Federal Permits and Approvals: National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Stormwater Discharges for Construction Activities, Categorical Exclusion Evaluation in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Which ENF or EIR review threshold(s) does the project meet or exceed (see 301 CMR 11.03):

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land | <input type="checkbox"/> Rare Species | <input type="checkbox"/> Wetlands, Waterways, & Tidelands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water | <input type="checkbox"/> Wastewater | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Air | <input type="checkbox"/> Solid & Hazardous Waste |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ACEC | <input type="checkbox"/> Regulations | <input type="checkbox"/> Historical & Archaeological Resources |

Summary of Project Size & Environmental Impacts	Existing	Change	Total	State Permits & Approvals
LAND				<input type="checkbox"/> Order of Conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Superseding Order of Conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 91 License <input type="checkbox"/> 401 Water Quality Certification <input type="checkbox"/> MHD or MDC Access Permit <input type="checkbox"/> Water Management Act Permit <input type="checkbox"/> New Source Approval <input type="checkbox"/> DEP or MWRA Sewer Connection/ Extension Permit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Permits <i>(including Legislative Approvals) – Specify:</i> Traffic Signal Permits
Total site acreage	18.9			
New acres of land altered		0		
Acres of impervious area	12.7	-0.6	12.1	
Square feet of new bordering vegetated wetlands alteration		0		
Square feet of new other wetland alteration		0		
Acres of new non-water dependent use of tidelands or waterways		0		
STRUCTURES				
Gross square footage	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Number of housing units	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Maximum height (in feet)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
TRANSPORTATION				
Vehicle trips per day	12000	2000	14000	
Parking spaces	11	0	11	
WATER/WASTEWATER				
Gallons/day (GPD) of water use	N/A	N/A	N/A	
GPD water withdrawal	N/A	N/A	N/A	

GPD wastewater generation/ treatment	N/A	N/A	N/A
Length of water/sewer mains (in miles)	N/A	N/A	N/A

CONSERVATION LAND: Will the project involve the conversion of public parkland or other Article 97 public natural resources to any purpose not in accordance with Article 97?

Yes (Specify _____) No

Will it involve the release of any conservation restriction, preservation restriction, agricultural preservation restriction, or watershed preservation restriction?

Yes (Specify _____) No

RARE SPECIES: Does the project site include Estimated Habitat of Rare Species, Vernal Pools, Priority Sites of Rare Species, or Exemplary Natural Communities?

Yes (Specify _____) No

HISTORICAL /ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES: Does the project site include any structure, site or district listed in the State Register of Historic Place or the inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth?

Yes No

The project site includes the State Register-listed Commonwealth Avenue Historic District, and abuts the State Register-listed individual property "The Chestnut Hill," 219 Commonwealth Avenue. The project site also abuts approximately 75 properties/areas that have been included in the Inventory of Historical and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth.

If yes, does the project involve any demolition or destruction of any listed or inventoried historic or archaeological resources?

Yes (Specify _____) No

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN: Is the project in or adjacent to an Area of Critical Environmental Concern?

Yes (Specify _____) No

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The project description should include (a) a description of the project site, (b) a description of both on-site and off-site alternatives and the impacts associated with each alternative, and (c) potential on-site and off-site mitigation measures for each alternative (You may attach one additional page, if necessary.)

MassHighway proposes to reconstruct Commonwealth Avenue in Newton from 330' (100.6m) west of Grant Avenue to approximately 525' (160m) west of the Boston city line. The project length is approximately 5,800 linear feet (1768m). The project also includes landscaping improvements.

The overall goal of the City of Newton's Commonwealth Avenue Reconstruction Project is to improve the capacity, safety and visual appeal of the Commonwealth Avenue corridor for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians along its entire length. The avenue's historic character as a winding boulevard, with a "carriageway" separated from the principal vehicular roadway by a broad central median (originally occupied by a double-track street railway line) will be respected and enhanced by a wide array of landscape improvements.

The reconstruction of Commonwealth Avenue is divided into six (6) phases. Phases I and II are projects in the City of Boston and are not under the jurisdiction of the City of Newton. The City of Boston has no current plans to move forward with Phases I and II. Currently, the City of Boston does not have any funding source established for the design of the projects; furthermore, they have not retained a design consultant or initiated the design process. Phases III, IV, V, and VI are in the City of Newton. Phase III is the subject of this document and runs from approximately 330' (100.6m) west of Grant Avenue to approximately 525' (160m) west of the Boston city line. Phase IV begins at the Grant Avenue intersection and continues west to and including the Walnut Street Intersection. Phase V is limited by the Weston town line in the west to Washington Street in the east. Finally, Phase VI completes the corridor between Washington Street and Walnut Street.

Phases III and IV were originally scoped as a single project in 1997; however, the project was revised and a reduced Phase IV was completed by the City using Chapter 90 funds. The currently proposed Phase III project completes the remainder of the originally proposed Phase IV project.

Furthermore, it is considered unlikely that the remaining Phases in Newton (V and VI) will be proposed or designed in the near or foreseeable future. Therefore, Phase III is being proposed individually as a project having independent utility from the remaining phases due to its geographic separation from Phases V and VI, its advanced state of design and its obligated funding source on the Federal Fiscal Year 2008 TIP.

Existing Conditions:

Commonwealth Avenue corridor is classified as a "Suburban Major Collector." The project corridor is residential in nature and is moderately settled. In 1997, the roadway carried an average of 12,000 vehicles per day and the projected vehicles per day in 2026 is 14,000.

Commonwealth Avenue currently consists of a 14.75' (4.5m) travel lane with a 8.2' (2.5m) parking lane in the eastbound direction and a 11.5' (3.51m) travel lane with a 1.6' (.50m) shoulder in the westbound direction. Commonwealth Avenue and the adjacent carriage way is separated by a median. Sidewalks are located adjacent to the road throughout the project with grassy areas separating the sidewalk from the road. Crosswalks occur regularly at intersections throughout the project length. Catch basins are located throughout the project corridor which serve as drainage for stormwater runoff.

Alternatives Considered:

The scope of work included in this proposed project was chosen as the preferred alternative because the project does not significantly change the character or alignment of Commonwealth Avenue or the Carriage Way. The design of both roadways was developed as part of the City of Newton's Master Plan. The project reduces pavement area and increases green space at the major intersections of Grant Avenue and Hammond Street. At the College Road intersection various scenarios were explored in conjunction with the City and Boston College to reconfigure the intersection to accommodate daily traffic as well as the Boston College Buses. In addition, the use of Mast Arms for mounting signals was extensively reviewed with both the City and MassHighway. The project concept was reviewed with the City's Commonwealth Avenue Advisory Committee.

Proposed Improvements:

The proposed project will include cold-planing and resurfacing both the Commonwealth Avenue roadway and the parallel carriageway roadway. The project will standardize the roadway width throughout the corridor. The carriageway width will be 21.98' (6.7m); the Commonwealth Avenue roadway width will be 37.73' (11.5m) near the principal intersections, narrowing to 36.09' (11.0m) away from those intersections.

Full-depth roadway reconstruction will be limited to three intersections (Grant Avenue, Hammond Street/Wachusett Road, and Mt. Alvernia Road), to roadway edges, and to areas where corner rounding is proposed. Along the carriageway, bulb-outs on the northerly edge of the roadway are proposed on both sides of each principal intersection. No significant roadway widening is proposed; the landscaped median will be widened slightly in some areas, recapturing areas that appear to have been encroached upon for roadway use or parking. Cumulatively, approximately a third of an acre of greenspace will be reclaimed within the median. All of the roadway work will be undertaken within the existing roadway footprints, and no land-takings will be required.

Proposed intersection improvements will include the replacement of existing traffic signal equipment at the Grant Avenue and at the Hammond Street/Wachusett Road intersections. Geometric and safety improvements are proposed for all of the roadway intersections along the project route. Specifically: the existing roadway cut through the median at Grant Avenue will be widened; the existing median cut at Manet Road will be narrowed; and the existing median cuts at Hammond Street/Wachusett Road, and at Mt. Alvernia, College, and Old Colony roads will be slightly reconfigured; all to improve traffic safety and flow. The existing median cut opposite Garrison Street will be closed and the enclosed area will be loamed and seeded. The project does not include the creation of any new roadway cuts through the median.

Other proposed improvements will include the installation of new granite curbing along both Commonwealth Avenue and the carriageway throughout the project area; as well as the construction of new, continuous cement concrete sidewalks, with new ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps at each street crossing, to replace the mixture of gravel shoulders, bituminous concrete and cement concrete sidewalks that presently exist. Other minor work throughout the project area will include signing and striping, minor drainage improvements, and provisions for bicycle access.

Environmental Resources, Impacts, and Mitigation:

Bicycle accommodation in the westbound direction shall be incorporated via the Carriageway. MassHighway's Bicycle/Pedestrian Accommodation Engineer has reviewed the project in accordance with the Project Development and Design Guide and The AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, and relevant bicycle and pedestrian accommodation standards. All comments dating back to correspondence sent on April 7, 1999 have been adequately addressed. The Design Waiver Request was approved on April 1, 2003. The documentation provided also justified exclusion from the bicycle accommodation standards due to impacts to trees and utility poles. Also, by altering the cross section the aesthetic quality and history of the corridor would have been compromised.

Landscape construction will consist of plantings, seeding, installation of street furniture, lighting, maintenance of existing trees and a one year maintenance contract on new plantings. Trees, shrubs, etc. will be planted in the 38 foot median reservation area that separates the main roadway from the Carriageway and in the grass strip along both the main roadway and the Carriageway.

Landscaping improvements will include the planting of approximately 400 new trees and shrubs throughout the project area. A total of 25 existing trees measuring between 12" and 30" in diameter will be removed; 17 of these because of their poor conditions; 8 due to construction conflicts. A total of 22 existing trees measuring 14" or more in diameter at breast height will be removed. Areas of worn, poor, or badly graded soil in the median will be scarified, graded, and loamed and seeded to blend in with the existing turf.

There is designated open space located adjacent to the intersection of Grant Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue. This land is owned by the City of Newton Water Department and its primary purpose is water supply. The name of the site is the Cochituate Aqueduct. It appears that all proposed work will occur within the existing approximate layout line, and therefore, no proposed work will impact this land.

MassHighway's Cultural Resources Unit staff reviewed the project and in their memo to the Massachusetts Historical Commission dated March 14, 2008 states that the project will have No Adverse Effect under Stipulation V.C. (1) of the amended Section 106 Programmatic Agreement. On April 14, 2008, the Massachusetts Historical Commission's State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with Cultural Resources Unit staff that this project will result in a No Adverse Effect.

MEPA Review and Other Permitting Requirements:

This project requires an Environmental Notification Form pursuant to 11.03(6)(b)2.b. The project requires the cutting of five (5) or more living public shade trees 14 or more inches in diameter at breast height. The project will result in the removal of 22 public shade trees 14 or more inches in diameter at breast height. The project also requires a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction General Permit for stormwater discharges for construction activities, a Categorical Exclusion Evaluation in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.