



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs*  
*100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900*  
*Boston, MA 02114*

Deval L. Patrick  
GOVERNOR

Timothy P. Murray  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Ian A. Bowles  
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000  
Fax: (617) 626-1181  
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

August 7, 2009

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
ON THE  
ENVIRONMENTAL NOTIFICATION FORM

PROJECT NAME : Nonantum Road Improvements  
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Boston, Newton and Watertown  
PROJECT WATERSHED : Charles River  
EEA NUMBER : 14441  
PROJECT PROPONENT : Massachusetts Department of Conservation and  
Recreation and the Massachusetts Highway Department  
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : July 8, 2009

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (M.G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62I) and Section 11.06 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I hereby determine that this project **does not require** the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

As described in the Environmental Notification Form (ENF), the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) are proposing transportation safety improvements to the Nonantum Road corridor in the communities of Watertown, Newton, and Boston, Massachusetts. The project limits extend along Nonantum Road from Galen Street in Watertown to North Beacon Street in Boston, a distance of approximately 8,100 feet. The purpose of this project is to improve vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian movement as well as safety along Nonantum Road by improving the roadway cross-section and intersection geometry. Improvements to the existing multi-use path within the Charles River Reservation parkland are also included as part of this project.

The existing 40-foot-wide, four-lane roadway has a long history of serious collisions and fatalities. The minimum 10-foot travel lanes, lack of shoulders or turning lanes, poor intersection

geometry and sight distance, and dangerous curves, coupled with sometimes excessive vehicle speeds, are all contributing factors to poor safety conditions. Also, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along the roadway corridor are often considered inadequate given the intensity of such use.

### Jurisdiction

The project is undergoing review pursuant to Section 11.03(6)(b)(2)(b), and Section 11.03(3)(b)(1)(f) of the MEPA regulations because the project is being undertaken by State agencies and will cut five or more living public shade trees of 14 or more inches in diameter at breast height and alter ½ or more acres of any other wetlands. The project requires a Section 8(m) Permit from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Because the project will receive federal funding through MassHighway, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) will review the results of evaluation for impacts to historic and archaeological resources by the Cultural Resources Section of the MassHighway in accordance with the terms of the Programmatic Agreement. The project will also require Orders of Conditions from the Boston, Newton, and Watertown Conservation Commissions.

The project will be undertaken by DCR and financed in part by MassHighway, both State agencies. Therefore, MEPA jurisdiction for this project is broad and extends to all aspects of the project that are likely, directly or indirectly, to cause Damage to the Environment as defined in the MEPA regulations.

### Review of the ENF

Nonantum Road is currently a four-lane parkway under the jurisdiction of DCR. Oriented in an east-west direction along the southern banks of the Charles River, Nonantum Road parallels the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) and connects Watertown to Boston. There are a total of four intersecting roadways located within the project area. Three of these roadways intersect Nonantum Road at an acute angle. This intersection geometry encourages undesirable wide turns, poor sight distance, and high speeds. These factors result in unsafe conditions for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians.

There is an existing multi-use path along the southern bank of the Charles River (north side of Nonantum Road) within the Charles River Reservation parkland. From Galen Street to Charlesbank Road, the path is approximately six feet wide with little to no separation from the roadway. Beyond Charlesbank Road to the project limit at North Beacon Street, the path is approximately nine feet wide, with a landscape buffer of varying width separating the path from the roadway.

The proposed safety improvements involve eliminating one travel lane in each direction, narrowing the existing roadway width in most locations from 40 feet to 32 feet and adding and/or expanding the landscaped buffer between the roadway and adjacent multi-use path. Also included in the project are intersection realignments at Water Street, Maple Street, and

Charlesbank Road to improve sight lines and facilitate turning maneuvers. A total of six pedestrian crossings along the corridor will be formalized with advanced signage and pavement markings.

#### Traffic/Transportation

The project will improve the travel conditions and safety of the deteriorating roadway. The project is not designed to increase roadway capacity. MassHighway has proposed several design exceptions along the project length to limit overall environmental impacts.

The project will require the removal of woody vegetation along the edge of the roadway. Part of the corridor is bordered by thick, mature vegetation. MassHighway should work with the Cities of Boston and Newton and the Town of Watertown to mitigate the loss of these public shade trees.

#### Wastewater/Stormwater

The ENF indicates that the project will incorporate Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are described in the Massachusetts Highway Department's (MassHighway) Stormwater Handbook which includes new drop inlets, water quality swales, and reconfigured or fully replaced catch basins. BMPs will minimize construction period erosion and sedimentation. I remind the proponent that the project will require a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) consistent with the NPDES Construction General Permit. In designing the SWPPP and stormwater maintenance plans for the project, DCR and MassHighway should expressly consider the detailed recommendations of the Charles River Watershed Association.

In its comments, the MWRA states that the project will require a Section 8(m) Permit, as authorized by Chapter 372 of the Acts of 1984, which enabled the MWRA to issue permits to build, construct, excavate, or cross within or near an easement or other property interest held by the MWRA, with the goal of protecting its infrastructure. MWRA has recommended that during the design, DCR should verify and ensure that any existing or proposed storm drains serving Nonantum Road, the intersections, or the adjacent parkland are not connected to the MWRA interceptors or tributary sewers. All storm drainage should be directed to surface waters or groundwater. Any existing storm connections to the MWRA interceptors or tributary sewers should be removed with the project.

#### Historic

Nonantum Road is listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places as part of the Charles River Reservation Parkway and the Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston. Because the project will receive federal funding through MassHighway, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) will review the results of evaluation for impacts to historic and archaeological resources by the Cultural Resources Section of the MassHighway in accordance with the terms of the Programmatic Agreement. The MassHighway Cultural Resources section must take into account the Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Parkways and the character defining features of this historic parkway as detailed in the National Register nomination.

Project Design Recommendations

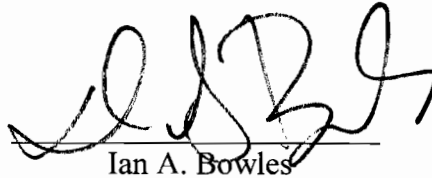
I acknowledge the thoughtful and detailed comments submitted by WalkBoston and the Honorable Senator Tolman, Representative Honan and Representative Moran that make specific recommendations as to how the project design could be revised to better accommodate the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians. While I recognize that this may require that a Design Exception be obtained for the project, I ask that DCR and MassHighway fully consider these recommendations and provide a response to the Allston-Brighton delegation concerning the outcome of this review.

Conclusion

Based on the information in the ENF and after consultation with relevant public agencies, I find that no further MEPA review is required at this time. The project may proceed to State permitting.

August 7, 2009

Date



Ian A. Bowles

## Comments received:

07/30/2009	Honorable Senator Tolman, Representative Honan and Representative Moran
07/28/2009	Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
07/30/2009	Massachusetts Historical Commission
07/30/2009	Charles River Watershed Association
07/30/2009	WalkBoston

IAB/ACC/acc