

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Environmental
Affairs ■ MEPA Office

ENF Environmental
Notification Form

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| <i>For Office Use Only</i> <i>Executive Office of Environmental Affairs</i> | |
| EOEA No.: | <u>13642</u> |
| MEPA Analyst: | <u>Rick Bourne</u> |
| Phone: 617-626- | <u>1130</u> |

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: Blackstone River Bikeway | | |
| Street: | | |
| Municipality: Blackstone, Millville, Uxbridge, Northbridge, Grafton, Sutton, Millbury, Worcester | Watershed: Blackstone | |
| Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 19 290705E 4654565N Blackstone 19 269660E 4682420N Worcester | Latitude: 42.02N B.stone/42.26 N Worc. Longitude: 71.53W B.stone/71.79N Worc. | |
| Estimated commencement date: 2007 - 2012 | Estimated completion date: 2008 - 2013 | |
| Approximate cost: \$21,000,000 | Status of project design: Pre-25 Percent | |
| Proponent: Massachusetts Highway Department in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation | | |
| Street: 10 Park Plaza | | |
| Municipality: Boston | State: MA | Zip Code: 02116 |
| Name of Contact Person From Whom Copies of this ENF May Be Obtained: Lori Macdonald | | |
| Firm/Agency: Massachusetts Highway Dept. | Street: 10 Park Plaza, Room 4260 | |
| Municipality: Boston | State: MA | Zip Code: 02116 |
| Phone: 617-973-7764 | Fax: 617-973-8879 | E-mail: lori.macdonald@state.ma.us |

Does this project meet or exceed a mandatory EIR threshold (see 301 CMR 11.03)? Yes No
 Project exceeds the following EIR Thresholds: 301 CMR 11.03 (1)(a)1. Direct alteration of 50 or more acres of land and 301 CMR 11.03 (3)(a)1. Alteration of one or more acres of BVW.

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

Has any project on this site been filed with MEPA before? Yes (EOEA No. 6180 Bikeway Section 6 was reviewed as a portion of the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90)/ Route 146 Connector Project) 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): Bikeway funded by MassHighway would be 80 percent federally funded and 20 percent state funded

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

List Local or Federal Permits and Approvals: Federal Section 404 and Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, National Environmental Policy Act (Categorical Exclusion), Section 4(f) of the DOT Act, NPDES Construction General Permit

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

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land | <input type="checkbox"/> Rare Species | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Order of Conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Superseding Order of Conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 91 License <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other Permits (including Legislative Approvals) – Specify: <u>May require approval of the Legislature for Article 97 land conversion</u> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| Total site acreage | 100 acres | | | |
| New acres of land altered | | 59 acres | | |
| Acres of impervious area | 26 acres | | | |
| Square feet of new bordering vegetated wetlands alteration | | Approx. 3.9 acres | | |
| Square feet of new other wetland alteration | | Various amounts of wetland alteration | | |
| Acres of new non-water dependent use of tidelands or waterways | | None | | |
| STRUCTURES | | | | |
| Gross square footage | | | | |
| Number of housing units | | | | |
| Maximum height (in feet) | | | | |
| TRANSPORTATION | | | | |
| Vehicle trips per day | | | | |
| Parking spaces | | | | |
| WASTEWATER | | | | |
| Gallons/day (GPD) of water use | | | | |
| GPD water withdrawal | | | | |
| GPD wastewater generation/treatment | | | | |
| Length of water/sewer mains | | | | |

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 The project may require the conversion of Article 97 resources to other uses) 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 Project within Priority Habitats 1088, 1184, 1199, and 1246) 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 (Specify The project site is within or near numerous National Register Historic Districts, individually listed National Register properties, and inventoried historic properties.) No

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

The Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) is proposing the Blackstone River Bikeway Project (referred to as the BRBW Project or Bikeway Project), a 28-mile bikeway through the municipalities of Blackstone, Millville, Uxbridge, Northbridge, Grafton, Sutton, Millbury, and Worcester.

The Bikeway Project is proposed in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Once completed, individual sections of the Bikeway will be owned and maintained by either the individual municipalities or DCR.

The BRBW in Massachusetts is part of a planned 48-mile bi-state bikeway project connecting New England's second and third largest cities – Worcester, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island. The Blackstone River Bikeway is the premier project within the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, a congressionally-designated area affiliated with the National Park Service.

As described below, the overall project is divided into seven sections as originally studied during the planning process:

- Section 1 (2.9 miles) – From the Massachusetts state boundary in Blackstone (at the northern terminus of the previously constructed Rhode Island portion of the Blackstone Bikeway in Smithfield, Rhode Island) to Central Street in Millville;
- Section 2 (3.3 miles) – From Central Street in Millville to Millville Road (Route 122) in Uxbridge;

- Section 3 (9.1 miles) – From Millville Road (Route 122) in Uxbridge to Tenneco Gas Pipeline right-of-way in Northbridge;
- Section 4 (1.1 miles) – From the Tenneco Gas Pipeline in Northbridge to the intersection of Ferry Street and Maple Avenue in Grafton;
- Section 5 (6.3 miles) – From the intersection of Ferry Street and Maple Avenue in Grafton to the completed bikeway section at the Route 122A interchange with Route 146 in Millbury;
- Section 6 (4.0 miles) – This section was constructed as part of the Route 146 Connector Project. From the Route 146/Route 122A Interchange in Millbury to Quinsigamond Avenue at Brosnihan Square in Worcester;
- Section 7 (2.6 miles) – from Quinsigamond Ave at Brosnihan Square to Union Station at Washington Square in Worcester.

The sequence of construction for the various sections would be dependent on factors, such as design status, availability of right-of-way, environmental permitting, and availability of funds. MassHighway has decided to combine Sections 3, 4, and 5 into a single project to expedite the design, permitting, and construction process.

A complete description of the seven Bikeway sections is provided in Appendix B, including the proposed alignment, alternative alignments not chosen, existing natural and cultural resources, and estimated environmental impacts. The Bikeway alignment is depicted on the enclosed plans and on Figures 1 through 10.

The Blackstone River Bikeway has undergone an extensive planning, public review, and alternative analysis process. This process was initiated when MassHighway and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) completed the *Massachusetts Blackstone River Bikeway Conceptual Design and Feasibility Study* in 1996 (the complete study is provided in Appendix D on a compact disc in Adobe Acrobat PDF format). During the Study, input was received on all sections of the Bikeway from a Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), the general public, and potentially affected property owners. The BAC was composed of representatives from each city or town and from a number of environmental organizations and public interest organizations. Several public workshops were held during the development of the 1996 Study. The sessions were held to inform the general public about the project and to present potential bikeway alignments to the public and obtain general feedback. Meetings were also held with potentially affected property owners to discuss the Bikeway Project and solicit comment on the potential impacts to their property.

During this study, alternative alignments were evaluated based on eight criteria, specifically, geometrics and safety; available land (public versus private); accessibility and connectivity; construction costs; compatibility with local, state, and heritage corridor goals; grades; aesthetic and visual conditions; and environmental and historic impacts. Using a point system based on these criteria, each of the proposed alignments was evaluated and, ultimately, a preferred alignment was chosen.

In 2001, MassHighway formed a Bikeway Task Force to help guide the implementation process for the design, permitting, and construction of the Blackstone River Bikeway. Task Force members include MassHighway, DCR, Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, National Park Service, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, Blackstone River Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Trust for Public Land. The Blackstone River Bikeway Task Force has been meeting regularly to identify effective and efficient ways to focus resources on building the bikeway. As the project proceeds, MassHighway will continue to work with the Bikeway Task Force to advance the project.

Since the completion of the 1996 Study, several additional feasibility studies have been completed for various sections of the Bikeway to evaluate the 1996 preferred alignment in light of current conditions along the preferred alignment and current bikepath geometric criteria. As a result of these additional studies, several alternative alignments have been adopted into the preferred alignment by the BRBW Task Force. Additionally, Section 2 is currently at the 25 Percent Design Phase.

The bikeway will be constructed as a combination of an off-road bike path, an on-road bike lane, or an on-road bike route. The alignment of the off-road portion of the Bikeway would use various corridors, such as abandoned railroads, active railroads, the historic Blackstone Canal towpath, utility corridors, and undeveloped terrain. As with other bikepaths in Massachusetts, the BRBW would be accessed from intersecting streets and provide periodic parking facilities (locations not yet identified) for those who wish to drive to the Bikeway.

As part of the preparation of this Expanded Environmental Notification Form, MassHighway conducted a GIS- and field-based analysis to calculate project impacts to wetlands, Bordering Land Subject to Flooding, Priority Habitats of Rare Species, and prehistoric and historic resources. A town-by-town and section-by-section breakdown of these impacts is provided in Appendix B, page 6. Additionally, the project plans included at the end of this document depict the location of the Bikeway alignment and the location (by Station Number) of potential areas of impact to Bordering Vegetated Wetlands, Bordering Land Subject to Flooding, and Priority Habitats of Rare Species. To reduce impact to these environmental resources, locations of mitigative slope treatments, such as mechanically stabilized earth embankments or retaining walls, have also been identified on the plans.

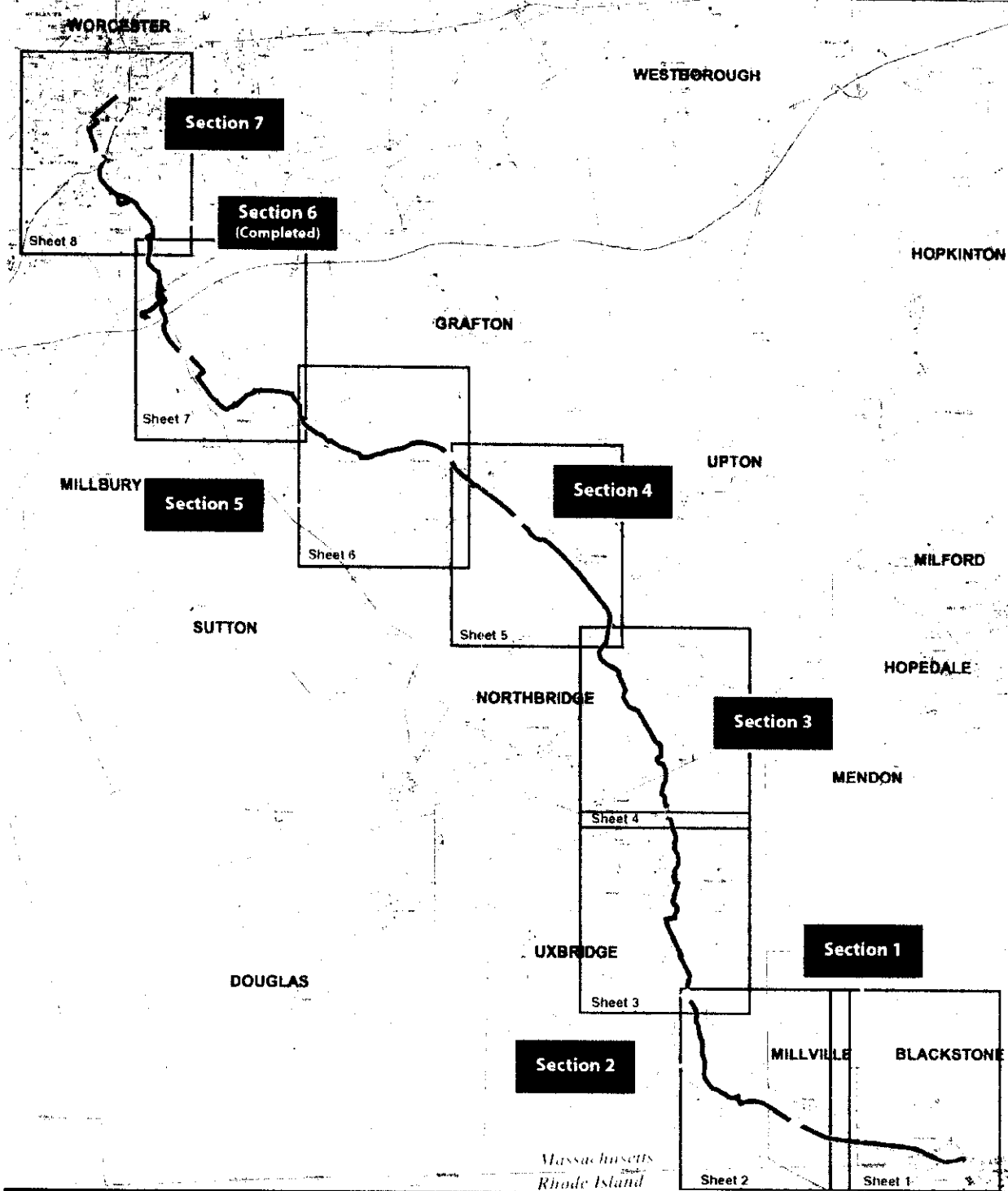
When considered as a whole, the Blackstone River Bikeway exceeds two thresholds for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), namely 301 CMR 11.03(1)(a)1, direct alteration of 50 or more acres of land, and 11.03(3)(a)1. a, alteration of one or more acres of bordering vegetated wetland. However, MassHighway intends the Bikeway to be designed, permitted, and constructed in phases with each phase including one or more of the remaining unconstructed sections of the project. These sections include BRBW Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7. Sections 3, 4, and 5 will be combined into a single project. Sections 1, 2, and 7 will proceed separately as independent projects. Each phase of the Bikeway

project will serve as a stand-alone facility not requiring the construction of other phases to serve as an alternative transportation facility.

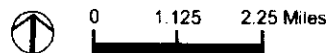
Because of the unique nature and history of the BRBW Project, MassHighway respectfully requests the Secretary of Environmental Affairs to allow the MEPA process for this project to proceed in the manner described below:

- allow the preparation of a Single EIR, in accordance with 301 CMR 11.06 (8);
- consent to a Phase One Waiver for Section 2 of the Bikeway, in accordance with 301 CMR 11.11

More details of this request are provided in Appendix B.



Source: - Color USGS Digital Imagery



Bikeway



BLACKSTONE RIVER BIKEWAY

Key Map

Sheet 1

Blackstone to Worcester, Massachusetts