

BELMONT COMMUNITY PATH
Summary of Public Comments received on the
Draft Preliminary Design Plans, dated July 1, 2020

- This document sharing page is not working. Too small to see anything. You need to allow to download the document or enable viewing in a full screen. At fixed window size, it is too difficult to view.
- The 25% design looks great. I would suggest widening the path to 16 feet in certain locations where possible.
- I would like to ensure I will have the ability to access the path from my backyard, as a Channing Rd abutter. It appears that the current plans allow for that, but I would be upset if my access to the path built behind my house was restricted due to some people's concerns about privacy. Please do not add large artificial barriers on the north side of the path, or lighting that will shine into our yards.
- This looks great. One small clerical issue is that page 8 is labeled as "40 Belmont Street" when it should read "40 Brighton Street".
- The Alexander Ave tunnel to the high school is the most important to us because it will allow students from our neighborhood to safely walk to the new school. We are pleased with the plans.
- Overall I like it very much, and will probably use this if it is built before I become too old, retired, and feeble. So hurry up, please. I think this is a good route, and most of my criticisms or suggestions are minor. My greatest concern is the intersection with Brighton Street because it is very complex already. I am not as worried about the mandatory-narrow portions because I am aware that the Minuteman Trail succeeds while also having a few mandatory-narrow portions. I would, of course, be happy to see them widened wherever it becomes possible.
 - Page 8, I think you mean to say "40 Brighton St" not "40 Belmont St" (twice).
 - Page 10, I wonder if the Clark St. Spur could be extended somewhat before joining, for the purpose of either reducing the slope of the Clark St. Spur before it joins the main path, or to provide a flat section for below to lose a little speed after coming down that grade. In addition, if the intersection itself could be made a bit more spacious, that might improve safety.
 - Page 11, if at all possible, the path should be shifted a few feet closer to the existing platform, and the extra space gained from this should be used to widen the shared-use-path (SUP) from path-and-platform down to Concord Avenue. In addition, if the right angles on the SUP down towards Concord and meeting the path itself can be relaxed, and/or widened, I think that would be good. My concern here is a combination of pedestrian and bicyclist conflict, plus mixing conflict with through traffic on the through path. Some cyclists will not be able to take those tight turns quickly or gracefully, and there is thus a greater potential for conflict with pedestrians. Larger bicycles (tandems, cargo bikes, Bakfiets, trailers) will also negotiate those tight corners and spaces with less grace than is desirable.
 - Page 15, is the Alexander Avenue access also intended to allow access for emergency or railroad maintenance vehicles? (This seems desirable). If so, will the pavement and retaining wall be durable enough for that load?
 - Page 21, is there an option to install a traffic signal there should that prove necessary. In my opinion drivers are often unable to cope with the complexity of the existing intersection; I've seen cars accidentally trapped between the gates and the RR tracks (fortunately not on the RR tracks, but still, not supposed to happen).

- Page. 21 and surrounding; an alternative to an intersection is to loft a bridge over Brighton Street. I realize that this seems extravagant, but I've seen this done in other states that we generally regard as being much less wealthy than Massachusetts, especially this part of Massachusetts. For example, the 45-mile Fred Marquis Trail in Pinellas County Florida has at least 7 overpasses which help with problematic intersections.
- Bring it on!
- Can the 25% Design report be posted as a downloadable PDF somewhere? The way it's posted right now is difficult to read. Thanks!
- Can you provide a high-level overview/summary of this project and what will be built?
- This is regarding the right-angle curves and relatively narrow path on pages 10 and 11. I think these need to be relaxed, or widened, to give cyclists more room to maneuver.
 - There's lots of potential conflict there, it would be great to avoid that in a new design, and I think this can be done by widening the connector paths, and by relaxing the throat of the curve (i.e., make the curved connection very wide, 20 feet perhaps, at the point where it connects to the main path. (But not to lose the main point, overall, I like this design very much and it solves some problems that had puzzled me when wondering how we would make this all work.)
- I thought it would be nice to participate in the design phase. The documents provided are unreadable, because they are so small.
- My only concern is that opponents of the Community Path will succeed in forcing it onto Concord Avenue, after all. It should obviously be constructed on the North side of the tracks between Brighton Street and Belmont Center.
- I support the Path Project and would use the path, whatever its route. However I had hoped that its route would use and connect underused Town parks (Clay Pit Pond Park and the neglected park between Royal Rd. and the MBTA Fitchburg Line, of which are on the other side of the Fitchburg Line) that would become inviting destinations for local residents, rather than using a more constricted and less attractive corridor (that will, however, serve the needs of through-bikers from Waltham and Waverley Square to Alewife).
- Very excited to see this design, and I would like to see it constructed and open as soon as possible, so that my family may travel between Alewife and Belmont center by bike, to get to the Commuter Rail station as well as to Bruegger's Bagels.
- I am in favor of the community bike path. One significant benefit would be the underpass at the end of Alexander Ave. I have lived on Alexander Ave. for 38 years and have hoped for an underpass all that time. My children walked to the high school and there was always a big temptation to cross the tracks rather than walk around to the Concord Ave underpass. I am also a bike rider and would love an easy way to access a path that does not have vehicles on it to go West and East. Although not an abutter, I do not consider the bike path a security risk - I do not believe the Minuteman bike path has proven to be a security risk for abutters or nearby homes.
- I want to voice my support for this project. This is a necessary public amenity and I am glad to see that Belmont is contributing to a project that will have a huge positive impact on so many. The alignment of the path looks great. The connection to the new high school is a big benefit and will connect the Winn Brook neighborhood to the high school.
- 1.) Very much in favor of tunnel. 2.) Concern about school drop-off/pick-up traffic at Alexander Ave, and Alewife commuters parking all day in the neighborhood

- I think the 25% project plan looks attractive and well thought out.
- It looks amazing and will be a great addition to the town.
 - Regarding Clark St Spur and Future Path Extension (pages 9 and 10). Is there a feasible plan for the future path extension, given all the already-sold-and-occupied ROW against the tracks to the east? I'm worried that a dead-end, otherwise unused spur would be an attractive nuisance. Perhaps the MBTA wants it for maintenance vehicular access. But, given that the de facto through path will use the Clark St spur until the extension is not a stub, that intersection between spur and path ought to be straightened to reflect this.
 - I also, just now, wondered how these tight corners will work for any snow/ice clearance equipment. We'll want that for the 4.5% grade of the Clark St spur, and it seems like this will be very important for ADA access at the Concord St / station platform connection, though that section is small enough it might be done by hand.
- As long-time Belmont residents and very frequent walkers on the Fitchburg Cutoff path to the Alewife T station and the Mystic River Watershed, as well as frequent bike riders on the Minuteman Trail, we strongly support the current design of the Community Path, especially its location on the North side of the tracks. We live very close to the Alexander Avenue underpass, which will make our connection much simpler, easier, faster, and especially safer, than our current traversing of the neighborhoods between us and busy Brighton St. The same can surely be said for many other residents. In particular, it alleviates a long detour or dangerous railroad track crossing for all the high school students from this side of the tracks. I also sometimes walk to the high school to walk on the outdoor track. We have attended town meetings to support the Community Path, and it seems that the vast majority of Belmont residents agree. The design updates should appease the few abutters who have opposed it.
- As a Winn Brook neighborhood resident, I strongly support the decision to locate the path on the north side of the railroad tracks. We are frequent users of the Fitchburg Cutoff and Minuteman trails and feel this is the safest route.
- Hurry up, my bike's ready!
 - Sheet 5 RR Station on left says "Pleasant St." - incorrect, it's Concord Ave.
 - Sheet 8 Titles say "40 Belmont St." - incorrect, it's 40 Brighton St.
 - Sheet 10 - potential for crashes at intersection of Clark St. extension and Comm Path, with bikes coming down 4.5% incline with a sharp turn at the bottom; and bikes going either direction on Comm path.
- I am 1000 percent behind this design. It makes a pedestrian-friendly town even friendlier. And gives travelers and commuters all-important access to the Alewife T Station. From so many perspectives, this bike path makes sense. The north of the tracks design is the easiest to install and the easiest for residents to access. And--in the case of the underpass bridge--it could save lives. I look forward to using this path on a nearly daily basis. I have no safety concerns. In fact, this path makes the town safer to negotiate by bicycle and on foot. My only suggestion is to make sure that the residences on Channing Road are adequately screened with vegetation for privacy purposes. Other than that, this project is a win-win-win for cyclists, commuters, pedestrians, residents, children (especially high schoolers), and anyone hoping to avoid or mitigate traffic passing through Belmont. Please approve and fund this design!

- I'm incredibly happy and excited to see these plans and progress on the Belmont bike path. I feel strongly that this bike path has the potential to have a huge impact on our town by increasing the ability for our residents to more easily traverse within and outside the town, as well as attract people from outside Belmont. The most important aspect of the path for me is its speedy, high quality completion - once complete, I think it will have a huge positive impact on our town.
- Bike paths, by design are popular with families who are encouraging small children to ride. This creates a dangerous environment where youngest and most vulnerable are at odds with cyclists who are riding fast to get to a destination. What is going to be done to encourage cyclists to slow down in the areas of this segment where the path will be narrow? The most important aspects of the path for me: Privacy, security, screening. My biggest concern: Not working alongside with abutters. You have representations on the committee from all stakeholders except the ones who will be affected the most.
- One minor comment to start:
 - Page 8 refers to 40 Belmont Street, but I believe it should read 40 Brighton Street.
 - I see on page 11 that the earlier conceptual plan of a park-like area on the slope to the west of the rail tracks down to Concord Avenue has disappeared in this iteration. Why?
 - I also see that the access to Belmont Center is a crossing between the old Power & Light building and the bank. This adds another mid-street crossing of Concord Avenue. Given that there is some question of how traffic flow might eventually be adjusted in Belmont Center, with more traffic diverted to that stretch of Concord Avenue, is this an appropriate place for a crossing?
 - Next question, I see a note for 8' chain link fence (typical) between the path and the MBTA tracks. This seems excessive; I believe that many city heights between active rail tracks and paths are in the 4' - 6' range (ref many examples on railstotrails.org). 8' seems intimidating and unnecessary, especially because the fence height along the Fitchburg cutoff to the east of Brighton Street is not 8' high. On the other hand, there does not appear to be any fencing typically shown between the community path and Channing Road abutters, except at retaining wall locations. Why?
- I am thrilled with this progress. It has taken a long time to get this far. The availability of a path between Belmont Center and Alewife will be reduce traffic, a major concern of mine, and will be good for business in Belmont Center, which needs boosting. The segment from the Center to the Clark Street bridge is in my precinct, and I welcome it--and the path's eventually continuation to Waltham and beyond.
- Concern- You can't zoom in on the plans and actually see anything here. Please provide plans that we can see when zooming in. Thank you.
- These plans look great! I'm especially excited to provide a connection between the Winn Brook neighborhood and the new school/Concord Avenue via the Alexander Avenue Underpass. This will give kids more safety and independence and get cars off of Brighton at the morning rush hour during school drop off time. It's hard to visualize the Clark Street spur in 3D -- mock-ups of what it would look like with pedestrians or bikes using it would be helpful.
- We attended some CPPC meeting so far and asked why the path will be put on the North side for section 1. A committee told that it was already decided and it is not time to discuss. We would like to know the legal binding and the legal ground of the decision by the committee and the process. The

information should be well communicated and fairly distributed and available to anyone at any time since we can easily expect a high rate of turnover of residents.

- Great to see the progress! I don't see sections keyed into plans, am I missing something? Would be helpful, I think. I am moderately concerned about drainage in the areas where the path is depressed below Channing abutter's properties, especially in winter where snowmelt can become an ice rink if it doesn't have a place to drain. Additionally, I feel like the barrier along 40 Belmont parking is unnecessarily harsh. It's already a tunnel in this narrow part, would be great to have that edge be lower/ softer- more like an 12-18" wall/guardrail? No fall protection issues, just keeping cars off path/ bikes out of parking lot.
- Looks promising! I can't tell much from these diagrams, but I'm really looking forward to this project happening!
- I am so glad to see this project moving along. The path location looks good. Everything seems sensible. Thank you.
- It is hard to convey in words how excited and happy we are that this project is moving forward! I am very excited to see the progress, and to see these plans starting to take shape for real. Ever since we moved to Belmont from Arlington, where we lived adjacent to the Minuteman path, we have longed for similar bicycle and walking connectivity to other rail to trail paths around the region. We have avidly supported the development of the community path project, along with its involvement of the neighborhood. we expect to use the path on a near daily basis, and when our son begins to attend Belmont high school, we are grateful that he will be able to walk to school safely using the underpass at Alexander Avenue. The most important aspects of this project for me are: the fact that it will connect Alewife station and the Fitchburg cut-off path to points west of Belmont with a fairly linear route through the center of town; the underpass at Alexander Avenue, which will link precinct 8 to the rest of the town via a walking path that will be safe to access and to the new junior and senior high school complex; and simply, that future residents will be able to walk, bicycle, learn to bike ride, connect with friends, and commute via a safe and protected pathway. Thank you for all of your efforts!
- Please widen the Belmont Community Path design to 16' wide + 2' shoulders per the initial plan. There is plenty of room in the corridor. It would be pennywise and pound foolish to skimp on this!
- Please widen Alexander Ave culvert to 14' or 16' to allow safe passing of bikes, wheelchairs, strollers etc. when people are traveling in opposite directions. Given that a large school is right there. this will be very important. Also, a wider culvert feels safer overall.
- I am very pleased and supportive of the proposal. It meets all my hopes for the path. As a resident on Oak St., the most valuable addition would be the Alexander St. underpass, which would link the two sides of the town that are severed between Concord and Brighton. I and my family would make use of that underpass regularly. We already walk our dog on the existing path that begins at Brighton and goes into Cambridge. The new path would also allow us to begin the walk at Goden Street using the Alexander St. tunnel and joining the community path there. I hope the plan is executed expeditiously.
- I agree with the path being on the north side of the tracks for the entire route. If the project is over budget, what will be cut? The tunnel under the tracks at Alexander Ave is a key element for student safety and removing a barrier that bifurcates the community, and it should not be cut for budget reasons. If cuts need to be made, the path could end at the train station. The extension of the path to Clark Street and the Clark Street Spur to street level are not essential elements of the path, and they can be included in the next phase. Thank you to all the Belmont folks who have worked on this path over the years. Good job.

- What are the plans for providing privacy to the houses along the path? Are thick/tall shrubs going to be planted along the path so people using the path can't easily see into the yards and back windows of houses along the path?
- Are there any plans or opportunities to get access directly to the path from your backyard? Our house is on Channing Road and it might be something we'd be interested in if there's an option - but we're wondering what it would look like or if it's a possibility at all.
- At the meeting, I felt you are trying to avoid to meet any abutters although you emphasized the importance of public engagement. The slide presented was actually our house. The drawing was not proportionally accurate, and it is deceiving to me because our house has an overhang and the house (somehow shown much smaller) is much closer to the potential path and the rails. You mentioned that trees will not be cut down and will be saved, but there are not much space between trees and the rails. We also have a shack behind our house which was not listed on the drawing. We also have a parking lot on the slope. The maintenance of the slop would cause some legal liability which we would not be happy to deal with. With tight space behind our house, I don't think the design plan is realistic nor feasible without huge sacrifice on our end.
- As I try and read the design plans, I'd like clarification to what's planed on the back of my property on Channing road. My fence is not the property line. I own roughly 10ft beyond the fence line and it looks like that area will be cleared which, if the case, is not something I have signed off on.
- The "screening" between the Channing Road abutters and the path has been discussed since the first committee. There were even surveys on this. Read the first committee report. To suggest a six-foot chain-link fence is insulting and offensive. It must be a solid wall that absorbs sound and of sufficient height that it cannot be climbed.
- I've talked to some people who are concerned about safety, specifically the length of the not-that-escapable section from Brighton to Alexander and then from Alexander to Belmont Center. They ask about lights, but abutters are not thrilled about lights in their backyard at night. HOWEVER -- there's no residential abutters on the south side of the tracks at all. And, I know that it's easy to focus LEDs so they are aimed in one direction, and not in others. Perhaps you can find lights that could be placed on the north side of the path, facing south, so that it illuminated the path and what was on it, but not much of the south fence, and none of the abutters' yards to the north?
- No major concerns. Strongly support the path design in general, as presented in the 25% design.
- Since 1995 I have lived in the Hill Estates apartment complex near where the Path will begin/end at Brighton St and regularly bike on the Minuteman Bikeway.
 - After the Alewife-Fitchburg cutoff was paved, I have used it to gain access to the Minuteman Bikeway, the Alewife station and as a place for walking for exercise. I can attest to the fact that during much of the winter even though the path is plowed portions turn into an ice rink due to poor drainage, and I cannot use it to access Alewife or as a place to walk for exercise. The risk of a fall is too great for me. I have grave concerns that insufficient attention will be given to the problem of water accumulating on the Community Path from Brighton St to Belmont Center where it essentially becomes a terrace on a hillside.
 - Whether or not the Community Path is plowed in the winter time, I hope some consideration will be given to the effect of the placement of landscaping (including fencing that cast shadows) on how rapidly (or not) it will allow sunlight to melt snow on or plowed to the side of the Path.

- Has anyone done a careful study as to the increase in water that will be dumped into the storm water system as a result of the building of the Community Path? Is it likely to add to the risk of flooding? Is someone going to legally challenge the hookups from the Community Path drainage system because of any current wastewater violations?
- I agree with the people at the meeting who spoke up against the plan of stopping bike traffic crossing Brighton St when a train has activated the crossing gates for cars. It makes no sense. Neither bicyclists nor car drivers are going to be happy with the amount of time they have to wait at Brighton Street so not allowing bikes to cross Brighton when traffic is stopped anyway for trains is a waste. Bicyclist will just walk through stopped auto traffic further away from the tracks.
- At the meeting there was some discussion as to what should be done at places where the right of way is wide enough to support both a paved and unpaved (gravel?) path. I would be inclined to recommend sticking to just one wide path - perhaps segregating walkers/runners from bicyclists by indicating such with paint.
- The proposed design uses trees to provide screening from the abutters. However, all the trees present now lose their leaves in the winter. Thus, this is unacceptable. The height of the wall should be sufficient to block the view of someone walking on the southern edge of the path.
- Great work -- very happy to see this project moving forward!
- I am delighted to be seeing this project going forward! Thank you for this work. Please continue the attention to making the path sufficient in width. I know that commuters, bikers, runners, and families will all be using this wonderful resource and I hope we can make sure there is sufficient space on the path for them all to go by each other safely and comfortably.
- It's been 8 years (wow) since the completion of the MAPC study on the Belmont Community Path. I am pleased to see the progress over the years by the Town to this point. I reviewed a good portion of the video from the meeting last week and have some comments on the pre 25% design:
 - Thanks for the thorough efforts by the design team to present a plan that addresses abutter concerns and design challenges.
 - East Access - by the Bank
Though I understand the desire to have trail access on the east side of Leonard St, if you are needing an easement from the bank property, wouldn't that complicate negotiations by proposing to take additional property for trail access?

Although that intersection of Channing and Leonard was recently rebuilt, it was not sufficiently narrowed in my view, and sustained an unnecessarily wide Leonard St just north of the underpass. To allow trail users to access the trail on the west side, I would consider narrowing the roadway around the underpass to a true two lane cross section to allow for safe ped and bike access across the south leg of the Channing intersection (where there currently is no crosswalk).

- Tunnel Width
The proposed 10-foot-wide tunnel is not at all sufficient in width. As there is no shoulder room, this has an effective width of 8 feet, which does not meet MassDOT standards. We have been concerned about insufficient path width on several bridge and tunnel plans in the region lately and it's of course almost impossible to change after construction.

The recently completed underpass of Conant Rd in Weston (image below) looks to be about 14 feet in width including a grass shoulder.



- Roundabout
The trail roundabout looks great. It will be fun for the residents to use. The Forest Hills trail roundabout is a good local example. However how will the MBTA access the tracks from Alexander St?
- Signal at Brighton St
I realize that the MBTA is concerned with people crossing Brighton St so close to the tracks, especially when a train is passing. However, the reality is that trail users will most definitely cross Brighton St when the gates are down and traffic is stopped. That should just be assumed. It's better to move the path as far from the gates as possible, which I see has been done in the design.
- Fencing
I highly discourage any solid fencing between the tracks and the trail, or between the trail and abutters. It creates a closed in feel, a canyon like effect, with loss in visibility to and from the surrounding area. There will be enough of the canyon effect with the required retaining walls approaching the tunnel. A black chain link fence or other porous material is a much better design. Plantings on either side of the fencing can help soften the edge and create additional buffers between the abutting properties.