

Access and Pathways

Strengths

Docks: Accessibility to the water; river docks are wonderful; boat access to the docks; great to access the park from the water

Footbridges and park access: Footbridges are essential; access to river-spanning bridges; number of access points into the parkland

Pathways: Long, uninterrupted pathways; good pathway plowing in winter (New Balance sponsorship); paved bike paths; nice to walk close to the water; access to North Station; room for bikes and pedestrians; generally well maintained paths

River: Proximity to the water is essential; water sheet use is strong; open views of the Charles

Weaknesses

Connections: Poor connections to the city at critical junctions, including the Craigie Dam Bridge (Museum of Science), Charles Cirlce (Longfellow Bridge), Harvard Bridge, Bowker overpass; link to the Fenway should be established

Footbridges: Users coming off bridge ramps at high speeds; no ramp into the park from the West side of Mass Ave (Harvard Bridge); footbridges are in poor condition

Handicapped access: Poor access for people with disabilities; questionable ADA compliance, especially on bridges and docks; poor wheelchair access to CBI

Pathways: Conflict of users on pathways; variation in speeds on pathways in dangerous; lack of separation between pedestrians and bikers; need to accommodate ever-increasing use of the park; more bike lanes; too many pinch points and bottlenecks on pathways

Signage and wayfinding: Access into the park should be more clearly marked; sidewalk pavers leading to the footbridge should be different from those elsewhere in the city (i.e. Public Garden)

Storrow Drive: Encroachment by automobiles due to Storrow Drive; pedestrian access on July 4 needs more planning and coordination; air quality is poor; difficult to get across Storrow Drive

Need more water transportation up and down the river

Opportunities

Connections: Esplanade should be tied to the larger, integrated Boston metropolitan park system; connect the Esplanade to the Muddy River and Fenway at Charlesgate/Bowker overpass; pathways could connect to Harborwalk, out towards Charlestown Navy Yard; eliminate Bowker overpass; access to Longfellow and BU bridges must be created; better park access from Beacon Street; improve pedestrian access to the city and under the bridges; link between Boston Common/Public Gardens and the Esplanade should be improved at the Fiedler footbridge; create land-bridges that span across Storrow Drive

Pathways: Dedicated “bikes-only” pathway would improve circulation and safety; remove or improve bottle necks; reduce the amount of blacktop within the park boundaries; eliminate sharp, right angle turns; create signs that direct bike and pedestrian traffic on pathways

Storrow Drive: Redesign the parkway so as to alleviate the road’s effect on the park; remove the parkway and permanent road structures; create at-grade access to the Back Bay and Beacon Hill across the parkway; shrink the travel lanes on Storrow to calm and quiet traffic; close one lane of Storrow traffic on Saturdays for non-motorized recreation; create “drop-off” points for people, boats, etc; eliminating a lane from Storrow Drive would create an improved bike routes along the Esplanade

Design better wheelchair-appropriate pathways and ramps

Rent bikes in the park

Work with Cambridge to improve pathway loops around the river

Water taxis would afford a new means of transportation

Build new parkland by adding fill to the river