



Via email to: kevin.r.kotelly@usace.army.mil

March 1, 2016

Kevin R. Kotelly, P.E.
US Army Corps of Engineers
New England District
696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742

Re: Capital Improvement Project 16-93, Bridge B-16-184 (38K), Northern Avenue over
Fort Point Channel, Northern Avenue Bridge Construction – Phase 1

Dear Mr. Kotelly,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Capital Improvement Project of the Northern Avenue Bridge. The Boston Harbor Association has long been involved in discussions regarding the rehabilitation of the historic Northern Avenue Bridge. During the early part of 2015, TBHA attended several stakeholder meetings and ultimately voted to support the rehabilitation of the bridge.

The Northern Avenue Bridge has long been viewed, from an urban planning perspective, as the gateway to the Seaport connecting the Greenway, Financial District, and Downtown area with the increasingly popular South Boston Innovation District. It is a critical pedestrian link between many of the businesses on either side of the bridge and significantly increases activation of the surrounding areas. We do not agree with the suggestion that pedestrians can and will equally use the Moakley Bridge to cross the channel; as neighbors and frequent pedestrians to and from the Seaport, we observe this not to be the case.

As long time advocates of the Boston Harborwalk and its ability to connect waterfront neighbors via the nearly uninterrupted 50-mile stretch, we consider the Northern Avenue Bridge a critical link to Boston Harbor's public waterfront walk. To optimize use of the bridge for pedestrians and promote activation of this section of the waterfront, we support:

- Creating a flat bridge for pedestrians, cyclists and small food and retail carts to encourage pedestrian use of the area and connect the Innovation District with

Downtown waterfront. We understand that this requires reestablishing a means of opening the bridge for purposes of navigation.

- Transforming the asphalt parking areas currently situated on either end of the bridge into pocket parks (like smaller versions of Post Office Square) with tables, seating, viewing areas, and seasonal landscaping.
- Creating public programming on the bridge itself--e.g. summer vendors, street performances and seasonal markets.
- Converting the stairs between the bridge and Rows Wharf into an ADA-accessible ramp. This would eliminate the need for people in wheelchairs to travel down to the side entrance of the Meritage Restaurant + Wine Bar in order to gain access to the ferries and waterfront.

During earlier discussions some parties, including TBHA, were willing to consider creating an emergency vehicle and HOV lane for use in case of emergencies. With the Moakley Courthouse directly connected to the bridge, we understand the need for increased safety protocol in the event of emergencies and terrorist threats. However, we oppose allowing private vehicles to make use of the bridge as it would do little to alleviate the current traffic issues on Seaport Boulevard and may instead create additional traffic snarls along Atlantic Avenue while substantially decreasing the pedestrian value of the bridge.

A recent *Boston Globe* article listed concepts and cost estimates the city is considering in the rebuilding/rehabilitation of the Northern Avenue Bridge. What are these estimates based on? We understand that rehabilitating the existing bridge without allowing for private vehicular use may well be the most economical option, as well as the option most supported by local stakeholders.

We look forward to reviewing the project's Environmental Assessment and/or Environmental Impact Statement. TBHA continues to support the rehabilitation of the Bridge and would be interested in a more detailed evaluation of the expected impact of the proposed activities on the public interest, including but not limited to protecting this important historical resource.

Sincerely,



Jill Valdes Horwood
Waterfront Policy Analyst



Julie Wormser
Executive Director