

Community Corner

# Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway To Get \$5.9M Redesign

MassDOT committed \$5.9 million to fund construction of the Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign Project.

By Jenna Fisher, Patch Staff  
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MassDOT committed \$5.9 million to fund construction of the Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign Project. (City of Newton)

NEWTON, MA — MassDOT has committed \$5.9 million to fund construction of the Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign Project as a State Prioritized Bicycle and Pedestrian Project, the city announced Wednesday.



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By Thorndike Development

Frederick Law Olmsted designed the Newton portion of Commonwealth Ave as part of the Emerald Necklace park system. It was built in 1895 with a line of the Middlesex and Boston Street Railway in the median, with Norumbega Park, an amusement park at the end of the line on the Charles River in 1897 to increase use of the line. Streetcar service was cut back to the Boston border in 1930 and buses last ran on Commonwealth Avenue in 1976, according to historian Bob Pollock.

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The redesign will focus on a disconnected segment of the carriageway from Lyons Field to east of Auburn Street near the Marriott Hotel.

The project proposes to create more green space and a walking and bicycle path by rerouting traffic from north of the median to the south side of the road.

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The project will also link area trail networks, including the Charles River Path and the Riverside Greenway trail network, and will connect with Weston's proposed shared use path on the other side of the Charles River Bridge, running along Commonwealth Avenue from the Newton to Natick borders.

Part of the project aims to increase access to the Charles River at the boathouse and improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists where there are no signs to drivers to watch for them.

A virtual public meeting to review the preliminary design for the project is set to happen sometime this fall, though nothing has been nailed down yet, according to the mayor's office.

The Riverside Greenway Working Group, the Lawrence and Lillian Solomon Foundation and MassDOT, Bike Newton the Newton Conservators and residents in Newton Lower Falls and Auburndale have been working on the project, according to Newton Mayor Ruthanne Fuller.

### Project Description

The project aims to create safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities to improve the City of Newton's connectivity to green space, trails, and other recreation opportunities. The proposed improvements to Route 30 and the adjacent carriageway begin just east of Auburn Street and end at Ash Street. For the segment from Auburn Street to Woodbine Street, the project will narrow the existing median and re-purpose the space on the north side of the roadway to either a shared-use path or separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities. East of Woodbine Street, the existing 22-foot carriageway will be converted to the shared-use path or separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The existing cross section of Route 30 will be maintained, but 5-foot shoulders will be striped to allow for on-road bicycling facilities. There will be three mid-block crossings with pedestrian beacons installed at MBTA bus stops and the Blue Heron trail entrance. The intersection at Ash Street will be reconstructed to improve pedestrian and bicycle crossings and address circulation issues at Lyons Field. This project was evaluated using the MPO's scoring criteria because it was considered for funding using Regional Target Funds. MassDOT funded the project, however.

Source	FY 2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
Federal Funds	---	---	---	---	\$4,731,645	\$4,731,645
Non-Federal Funds	---	---	---	---	\$1,182,911	\$1,182,911
Total Funds	---	---	---	---	\$5,914,556	\$5,914,556

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In many ways this is a continuation of proposals from Jane and Phil Hanser, who in 2012, set out to document safety problems of the Carriage Lane. They came up with a number of solutions of their own, from stop signs to signals that have slowly been implemented throughout the years, according to [CommonwealthAveCarriageLane.com](http://CommonwealthAveCarriageLane.com)

The funding for the project comes mainly for the bicycle and pedestrian project comes from statewide highway funds.

Newton is also getting \$300,000 for a new technology-enabled transportation service to run between all three MBTA lines and the Wells Avenue Business District, before expanding citywide. The idea is this will build on the city's NewMo (Newton in Motion) for senior citizens.

The state has also committed \$2.3 million to cleaning and painting the structural steel on the bridge that goes over I-95.

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*Got a tip? Patch reporter Jenna Fisher can be reached at [Jenna.Fisher@patch.com](mailto:Jenna.Fisher@patch.com) or by calling 617-942-0474. Follow her on Twitter and Instagram (@[ReporterJenna](https://twitter.com/ReporterJenna)). Have a press release you'd like posted on the Patch? Here's [how to post a press release, a column, event or opinion piece](#).*

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