



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

Statement on safe bicycle infrastructure on the Longfellow Bridge

The Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 6,900 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in all matters concerning their quality of life during their studies at MIT. We support all measures that increase the availability, quality, safety, and affordability of transportation services and infrastructure used by students. **We are concerned that current plans for re-opening the Longfellow Bridge do not incorporate infrastructure necessary to ensure the safety of bicyclists, and strongly urge our state representatives and senators to call on MassDOT to pilot an inbound protected bicycle lane.**

MIT students regularly use bicycles as a means of transportation: it is the primary commuting method for 30% of off-campus students.¹ At the same time, lack of safe bicycling infrastructure makes greater than 50% of students and 40% of staff less inclined to ride to campus.¹ Cambridge city data similarly shows that only 25% feel very comfortable on conventional bicycle lanes, compared to 80% on protected lanes.²

As one of two bridges adjoining MIT's campus, and a major commuting corridor for Cambridge and the broader Boston region, the Longfellow Bridge represents a crucial link among our Massachusetts communities. According to the Boston Transportation Department, bikes accounted for 35% of inbound traffic during morning rush hour in 2017.³ However, the current proposal by MassDOT⁴ allocates two travel lanes and a narrow, unprotected bicycle lane, rather than adopting one of the safer separated lane designs in its own Complete Streets Guide.⁵ This will create dangerous riding conditions, right next to rapid traffic and large trucks.

The current proposal by MassDOT foregoing safe bicycling infrastructure was decided in 2013 based on older data. Over the five years of construction, large traffic backups have not occurred, just as bicyclists on the bridge have increased, growing 60% in 2017.³ A different proposal by the Boston Cyclists Union, Cambridge Bicycle Safety, and others,⁶ which has been endorsed by the Cambridge City Council⁷ and Massachusetts Reps. Livingstone (whose district contains the Longfellow) and Connolly,⁸ calls for a pilot of a wide bicycle/emergency vehicle lane with a buffer and one vehicular travel lane. The proposed lane allows for safe riding on the steep grade and doubles as an emergency vehicle lane when the travel lane is congested. The proposal further calls for only paint and flexible posts, which could be rearranged at any time if traffic conditions worsen. **The GSC strongly urges our state representatives and senators to call on MassDOT to consider these trends and prioritize the safety of Massachusetts' vulnerable road users through this flexible pilot.**

Prepared by the External Affairs Board on behalf of the MIT Graduate Student Council. April 2018.

¹ [MIT 2016 Transportation Survey.](#)

² [Cambridge Bicycle Survey, October 2014.](#)

³ [City of Boston, 2017 Boston Bicycle Counts.](#)

⁴ [MassDOT, Longfellow Bridge Rehabilitation Project, April 2013.](#)

⁵ [MassDOT, Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide 2015.](#)

⁶ [Boston Cyclists Union, "Help win Protected Bike Lanes on the Longfellow Bridge".](#)

⁷ [Cambridge City Council Policy Order POR 2018 #74.](#)

⁸ [Letter to MassDOT in support of Longfellow bike lanes.](#)