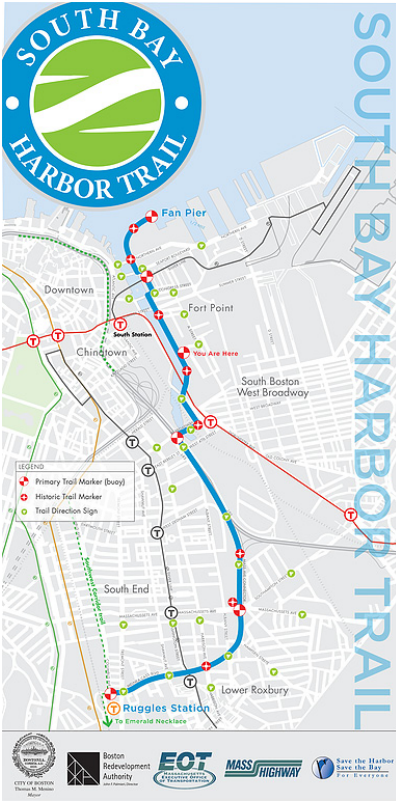


Beth Treffeisen | February 2, 2017

South Bay Harbor Trail project gets set in motion



A pedestrian and bike trail that will connect Boston's neighborhoods to its waterfront through a three and a half mile route is one step closer to completion after securing funding to construct part of the trail.

Once completed, the trail will go through Roxbury, the South End, to the Fort Port Channel in South Boston.

The latest piece that secured \$2.2 million in funding will connect the South End to South Boston by extending the Fort Port portion of the trail across the West Broadway Bridge and the West Fourth Street Bridge down to the start of Albany Street.

"This piece is hugely important because it is a huge upgrade of safety of people traveling on foot and bicycle," said Jim Gillooly

the deputy commissioner of the Boston Transportation Department (BTD).

Designs for this trail began in 2008 when Save the Harbor/ Save the Bay collaborated with the then Boston Mayor Thomas Menino to connect Boston's neighborhoods with Boston Harbor and the Emerald Necklace.

Problems soon arose when both public and private parcels became difficult to acquire, such as a part that ran along the state-owned frontage road under the highway underpass.

Gillooly said that no longer became a problem when they realized it would be better to move the trail that originally went down I-93 frontage road to Albany Street. The move to the area behind the old Flower Exchange and Boston University Medical Center came after multiple residential developments moved to the area said Gillooly.

"That would serve people in that developed area as opposed to being along the other side of a fence near the highway," said Gillooly. Another change will be instead of using one bridge for two-way traffic, it will be broken over two bridges in one- way traffic on West Broadway in one direction and then over the West Fourth Street in the other direction.

Coordination with the designs of the South Bay Harbor Trail and neighboring development parcels are also coordinating with the

Melnea Cass Boulevard re-design project.

This includes the development of a Complete Streets roadway and streetscape design that creates a pedestrian friendly environment, ensures efficient traffic flow, accommodates transit vehicles and bicycles. The goal is to bridge the gap between the South End and Roxbury.

The initial City of Boston investment of \$2.2 million for the design is being supported by federal earmark and state matching funds for construction totaling \$25 million that will go towards the Melnea Cass Boulevard portion of the trail.

About 80 percent of the funding came from the federal level and 20 percent came from the state to match it.

"We went from no funding for this segment in a short term to being totally funded with the need to do expedited coordination and design in order to qualify for the state money for the project," said Gillooly. "We were able to get all the checks down the row."

Construction of the first piece of this project, the portion that runs from the Fort Point Channel to the South End, is scheduled to begin in the early part of 2018. The Melena Cass Boulevard section will then follow in 2019 and will be completed by 2020.

Once the final design plans for the portion of the trail that will connect those two segments are completed, BTD will begin to think about the funding for completing the entire trail.

On Thursday, January 26, BTD held a public meeting to gain feedback from the community. Gillooly said that about 35 people joined in and gave very helpful suggestions that they will add to the presentation before holding a second meeting sometime in the late spring or early summer.

"This is a great opportunity in expanding the trail and it doesn't come in often," said Gillooly. "I encourage people to get their comments into the city early because in order to get the funding it needs to happen fast, otherwise we loose this opportunity."

You can learn more about this project at boston.gov and submit comments by sending an e-mail to the project manger at William.Conroy@boston.gov.

You can read more at MissionHillGazette.com