



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION for
OLMSTED
PARKS

*"...advances Olmsted's principles and legacy of irreplaceable parks
and landscapes that revitalize communities and enrich people's lives."*

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July 10, 2020

Matt Jasmin, PE
Project Manager / Senior Civil Engineer
Howard Stein Hudson
Jeffrey R. Parenti, PE, PTOE, PTP, ENV, SP
Deputy Chief Engineer (Program Manager),
Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Arborway Parkway Improvements
c/o Howard Stein Hudson
11 Beacon Street, Suite 1010
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Messrs. Jasmin and Parenti:

I write on behalf of the National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP). We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments in advance of the formal design process and support the shared goals set out by the DCR.

The current Arborway Parkway Project provides a very timely opportunity to recapture Frederick Law Olmsted's design intent for this section of the Emerald Necklace. Providing this parkway with dedicated paths for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as busy traffic routes, will ensure that the safety and quality of life for numerous users, commuting Bostonians and visitors will be immeasurably improved.

Olmsted's inspired vision was that the Arborway, like the other transportation linkages connecting diverse parks throughout the municipality, should be more than a mere a road. In his plan, the Arborway was an integral part of a green multi-modal system of linear parks, Boston's unique Emerald Necklace, designed to enhance the ambiance for Boston's residents and visitors.

In developing his concept of the parkway, Olmsted focused on both functional and aesthetic concerns. The parkway consists of a series of separate travel ways designated for different uses –passive and active, business and recreational. By separating conflicting or incompatible uses, Olmsted intended to give users a safe, efficient and restorative experience.

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Travel along the Arborway was separated into routes for pleasure drives by carriage, with the outer routes for more functional wagon traffic to service the abutting houses. Tree-lined and grassy strips separated these ways, serving as pedestrian sidewalks or equestrian routes. Much as he had done in New York's Central Park and in Brooklyn's parkways, Olmsted separated functions in order to reduce distractions and allow pedestrians to enjoy their experience without worrying about horses and carriages, and later automobiles.

In his design, Olmsted sought to have the Emerald Necklace meet fundamental social and psychological needs. Boston residents needed places for active and passive recreation. And *all Bostonians* deserved access to the variety of recreational opportunities that the Emerald Necklace offered—whether they traveled in his day by carriage, by horseback or by foot; or today, by automobile and increasingly by bicycle. The Arborway is thus part of a *continuous, linked* linear route into and out of the city center, connecting parks and neighborhoods.

Viewing the Arborway through the lens of Olmsted's design underscores the importance of accommodating cyclists and pedestrians as well as automobiles. A priority improvement should be the realization of dedicated and continuous spaces for cyclists and pedestrians (in both directions) throughout the Arborway. The bike network currently has a dangerous gap (between Jamaica Pond and Forest Hills) and this should be eliminated.

In this way, the Parkway would more fully achieve Olmsted's vision of an accessible democratic space—one where residents of different neighborhoods and from different backgrounds meet. As Olmsted realized, a functioning parkway is not a luxury. It is essential to the mental and physical health of urban dwellers who seek the benefits of connecting with nature—a fact confirmed by the increase in bicyclists and the intense use of Boston's Emerald Necklace parks in the age of COVID-19.

NAOP encourages DCR to see this project as an opportunity to preserve and more fully realize the park-system that Olmsted created nearly two centuries ago and that generations of Bostonians continue to enjoy.

Founded in 1980, NAOP is the only national organization dedicated to protecting Olmsted parks and places. For 40 years, we have advanced Olmsted design principles and the legacy of irreplaceable parks and landscapes that revitalize communities and enrich people's lives. www.naop.org. We would be pleased to assist in any way that might help.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Anne D. Neal Petri
President/CEO



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION *for*
OLMSTED
PARKS

Arborway Parkway Improvements Project
NAOP ABRIDGED COMMENTS SENT VIA WEBSITE, July 10, 2020,
<https://www.mass.gov/dcr/public-comment>

I write for the National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP), the only national organization dedicated to protecting Olmsted parks and places.

The Arborway Parkway Project provides a timely opportunity to recapture Frederick Law Olmsted's design intent for this section of the Emerald Necklace. Providing dedicated paths for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as busy traffic routes, will immeasurably improve the safety and quality of life for numerous users and visitors.

In his design, Olmsted wanted the Arborway to be more than a mere a road. It was an integral part of a continuous, linked linear route into and out of the city center, connecting parks and neighborhoods.

In developing the design, Olmsted focused on functional and aesthetic concerns. Travel was separated into routes for pleasure drives by carriage, with outer routes for more functional wagon traffic. Tree-lined grassy strips separated these ways, serving as sidewalks or equestrian routes. By separating conflicting uses, Olmsted gave users a safe, efficient, and restorative experience.

As Olmsted saw it, all Bostonians deserved access to the recreational opportunities that the Emerald Necklace offered—whether they traveled in his day by carriage, horseback or foot; or today, by automobile and by bicycle.

Viewing the Arborway through this lens underscores the importance of accommodating cyclists and pedestrians as well as automobiles. A priority improvement should be dedicated and continuous spaces for cyclists and pedestrians (in both directions) throughout the Arborway. The bike network has a dangerous gap which should be eliminated.

In this way, the Parkway would more fully achieve Olmsted's vision of an accessible democratic space – one where residents of different neighborhoods and from different backgrounds meet.

NAOP encourages DCR to see this project as an opportunity to more fully realize the park-system that Olmsted created and that Bostonians continue to enjoy.

Anne Neal Petri, President/CEO
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