

BOSTON'S MAJOR PARK SYSTEMS ARE POISED FOR RECONNECTION, RESTORATION OF THE EMERALD NECKLACE'S CHARLESGATE PARK, EXPANSION OF THE ESPLANADE AND THE DAYLIGHTING OF A KEY SECTION OF THE MUDDY RIVER AS A RESULT OF A PROPOSAL BY COMMUNITY AND PARK ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS AND PROPOSED MAJOR BRIDGE AND ROADWAY INVESTMENTS BY THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MASSDOT)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

MassDOT's latest capital plan proposes to invest \$150+ million in the revitalization of two bridges in Boston's Charlesgate Park and on the Esplanade. It improves the adjacent infrastructure following years of partnership and design work by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, Charlesgate Alliance, Esplanade Association and their collaborators at the Friends of the Public Garden to relink Emerald Necklace parks, the Charles River Esplanade and Commonwealth Avenue Mall, plus provide critical local and regional connectivity between numerous urban communities, green transportation networks and ecological restoration.

Emerald Necklace Conservancy and partners to thank project supporters, leaders and collaborators, and celebrate the planting of 15 new community-sponsored trees in Charlesgate Park at a public event on Tuesday, June 28.



The 3 areas of improvement of the Charlesgate Park Revitalization Project. Image credit: Landing Studio.

Boston, MA 23 June, 2022 – The [Emerald Necklace Conservancy](#) and its partners, the Charlesgate Alliance and the Esplanade Association, are thrilled to celebrate the planting of new community-sponsored trees and MassDOT's proposal for allocating over **\$156 million to fund two transformational transportation projects** that will be key to unlocking over 13 acres of public parkland adjacent to the Charles and Muddy Rivers, daylighting the Muddy River and revitalizing the Charlesgate area in Boston.

The proposed highway projects, unveiled in MassDOT's 2023-2027 Capital Investment Plan as Projects 606728 and 606496, have been championed by the Conservancy and its partners as part of achieving [a comprehensive re-envisioning of Charlesgate Park](#) and a section of the Esplanade. They will be a major improvement for urban recreation and public health. On **Tuesday, June 28**, the Conservancy, Charlesgate Alliance and Esplanade Association will host the "New Trees and a Brighter Tomorrow for Charlesgate: A Celebration of our Partners and Champions" public event to thank the project's long-time advocates, celebrate the planting of 15 new trees in Charlesgate Park and applaud the support of public agency partners MassDOT and the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The revitalized Charlesgate area will benefit not only the local but also the regional community with a rejuvenated park, new visitor amenities, environmental improvements and a restored regional bicycle and pedestrian transit link. **Detailed map of the area as well as "before" and "after" renderings are available for [download here](#).**

Among myriad environmental, transportation and user benefits, these projects include several once-in-a-generation opportunities:

- (1) to reconnect the Emerald Necklace and Charles River Esplanade park systems for the first time since they were broken in the 1950s,
- (2) to daylight the Muddy River where it connects to the Charles River,
- (3) to recapture 10 contiguous acres of Esplanade parkland touching the Charles River for open space and new pathways,
- (4) to create pedestrian and bike connections between the Back Bay Fens and Charlesgate Parks and from the Esplanade to Massachusetts Avenue, and
- (5) to clear the way for a widely sought restoration of Charlesgate Park.

Repairing these connections will once again enable regional bike and pedestrian routes from Watertown to Quincy to connect through over a dozen communities connected by the Emerald Necklace, extending to Franklin Park and its neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan.

"This is a tremendous milestone in our ongoing effort to improve the entire Charlesgate area and its connections to the rest of the city and to regional bike and pedestrian transit," said Karen Mauney-Brodek, President of Emerald Necklace Conservancy. "These are the results of the advocacy and partnership-building work of the Conservancy, Charlesgate Alliance, Esplanade Association, our city and Commonwealth officials, the community at large and the design and planning acumen of architects Marie and Dan Adams of Landing Studio. MassDOT's proposed budget allocation and ingenious engineering efforts really bolster our vision for the revitalized park and its surrounding connections for greenspace and people-powered transit. We applaud the Commonwealth's leveraging of the need to rebuild crumbling grey infrastructure to simultaneously restore a significant portion of the Esplanade and reconnect the Emerald Necklace, plus provide a much healthier, greener future for the transportation and river network throughout our city and region. Once realized, this will be a legacy worthy of the next 100 years."

"We are thrilled for what the transformation of Charlesgate Park and the Esplanade will achieve,

including the recapture and reconnection of up 10 acres of direct riverfront parkland on the Esplanade, the development of an improved multimodal pathway system through one of the park's worst pinch points and an incredible reconnection of the historic Emerald Necklace and Charles River Esplanade linear park systems," shared Michael Nichols, Executive Director of the Esplanade Association. "We will all benefit from the completion of this project for generations to come!"

On **Tuesday, June 28 from 9:30am to 11am** (rain date: Wednesday, June 29 from 1:30 to 3pm), the "New Trees and a Brighter Tomorrow for Charlesgate: A Celebration of our Partners and Champions" event will be held in "The Grove" area of Charlesgate Park at the Southwest corner of Beacon Street and Charlesgate East ([Google maps pin](#)). Here, guests have the opportunity to learn more about the Charlesgate Park Revitalization Project through remarks from Mauney-Brodek, the Charlesgate Alliance, Nichols, local community leader and park supporter Margaret Pokorny, who stewarded the planting of 15 new trees, elected officials in support including State Senator William Brownsberger and State Representative Jay Livingstone. The event is free and open to the public, with registration open [here](#).

"I'm so grateful to MassDOT's engineering team for developing a very creative approach to necessary maintenance that will greatly improve the Emerald Necklace parks and waters," shared State Senator William Brownsberger.

"We are all pleased to celebrate this first of many milestones for this transformational project and to have been part of a great team to make this happen," shared State Representative Jay Livingstone.

About the Charlesgate Park Revitalization Project

Charlesgate Park, located at the intersection of Boston's Back Bay, Fenway and Kenmore neighborhoods, was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as the first part of the Emerald Necklace, connecting the Charles River Esplanade, Commonwealth Avenue Mall, several neighborhoods and the five-mile, six-park linear park system known as the Emerald Necklace. In the 1950s and 1960s, prioritization of road construction over parkland (Storrow Drive) compromised this once-idyllic space, overshadowing it with a highway overpass (Bowker Overpass), and dividing it with new roads and on-ramps, ultimately increasing pollution of the Muddy River and deteriorating the park's usability. Stripped of its amenities, Charlesgate Park – originally a neighborhood greenspace and a local destination – now functions primarily as a pass-through for pedestrians and vehicles, devoid of recreational services.

In addition to the proposed MassDOT improvements, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has been leading an effort with numerous partners and supporters to revitalize and fund the "heart of the park" to provide a universally accessible children's play area, one of the largest dog parks in the city, new pathways for bike and pedestrian use, the implementation of green infrastructure and resilience to improve health of the Muddy River, which suffers from untreated run off.

Resilience and green infrastructure enhancements include:

- Improved flood resilience with increased water storage capacity
- Water quality improvements through drainage infrastructure, shoreline vegetation and Muddy River daylighting
- Shoreline restoration
- Habitat restoration

- Green stormwater infrastructure
- Urban heat island mitigation via increased tree canopy and street trees
- Groundwater recharge and water table restoration
- Carbon sequestration
- Improvements to urban public health through air and water quality

Mobility, transportation and access enhancements include:

- Shared-use pathways for pedestrians and cyclists
- Rest areas for users of different ages and abilities
- Safe street crossings through signalization, crosswalks, lane reduction, curb extensions and protected lanes
- Universal accessibility
- Improved lighting and sight lines
- Connective routes to promote safety and security
- Critical regional bike and pedestrian link connecting the Charles River Esplanade, Memorial Drive, Commonwealth Avenue and the Emerald Necklace parks to further regional networks.

Park user amenity enhancements include:

- Universally accessible play area
- Fitness stations
- Dog play area
- Seating areas
- Safety and security through site activation
- An accessible neighborhood destination for fitness and recreation

The Charlesgate Park Revitalization Project's planning phase is made possible with support from Liberty Mutual Foundation, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the City of Boston's Community Preservation Act, The Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation, an anonymous donor and individual contributors. The project is actively seeking support from private and public sources. To learn more and support the revitalization and maintenance of Charlesgate Park, visit <https://www.emeraldnecklace.org/restoration/charlesgate/>.

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About the Emerald Necklace Conservancy

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy is a community-supported non-profit founded in 1998 to steward and champion the Emerald Necklace, Boston's largest park system of seven distinct parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted to connect over a dozen neighborhoods with 1,100 acres of meadows, woodlands, waterways, paths and parkways. Working with civic and neighborhood partners, the Conservancy strengthens parks, people and policy by advocating for the Emerald Necklace and advancing access, maintenance and restoration, park stewardship and education through volunteer and youth programs and inclusive public programming. The parks serve as a healing respite from the city, a valuable commuting connector and a community convener for more than one million residents and tourists each year, and have taken on a special significance as a safe and socially distanced destination for recreation and reconnection since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.emeraldnecklace.org>

About Charlesgate Alliance

The Charlesgate Alliance launched in January 2017 to bring positive change to the Charlesgate neighborhood. The Alliance is dedicated to improving Charlesgate Park and knitting together the Kenmore, Back Bay and Fenway neighborhoods around a central Charlesgate district. www.charlesgatealliance.org

About the Esplanade Association

The Esplanade Association is a privately funded nonprofit organization that works to revitalize and enhance the Charles River Esplanade, sustain its natural green space, and build community in the park by providing educational, cultural, and recreational programs for everyone. Working in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Esplanade Association is dedicated to improving the experiences of the millions of visitors who enjoy Boston's iconic riverside park. www.esplanade.org

MEDIA CONTACT:

Edwina A. Klünder

617.888.5859/ eakluender@gmail.com