

Charles River Skatepark Update

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cambridge, MA – July 2010 - The Charles River Skatepark is a project of the Charles River Conservancy undertaken in close collaboration with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Planning started in 2001 and fundraising started in 2004. To date, the Charles River Conservancy has raised \$2.5 million for this facility to be built under the ramps of the Zakim Bridge in East Cambridge.

Grindline, an industry leader in skatepark design and construction, came up with a conceptual design, which evolved over several years with the input of some 400 skaters. The design entails about half streetscape elements and 3 bowls with the addition of a vertical cup.

As the financial crisis towards the end of 2008 became increasingly severe, concerns such as the long-term maintenance came to the forefront of the skatepark discussions. As a result, the CRC and the state agencies began to work together to resolve these concerns.

During 2009, this work consisted of identifying capital funds that could be used for construction, while reserving the balance of the CRC-raised funds for long-term maintenance. This involved close collaboration with state agencies such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Executive Office of Environmental and Energy Affairs (EOEEA), and the new MassDot, formerly known as the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA) and Mass Highway.

2010 Status

Thanks to a federal stimulus grant, the funds for constructing the North Bank Pedestrian Bridge freed up Big Dig Mitigation funds. In September 2009, the Citizen Advisory Committee approved the State's proposal to use Big Dig Mitigation funds to construct the skatepark as well as the additional pedestrian bridges. On the attached map you can see that there will be 4 pedestrian bridges in total, making it easier to access the skatepark from Charlestown, the Harbor Walk, Boston's Downtown North (and North Station) and the Museum of Science. Staging for this North Bank Pedestrian Bridge has already started. This elegant new bridge will be landing right next to the skatepark and will cross over the railroad tracks, the Miller River and starts under the Zakim Bridge.

While DCR will be responsible for construction, under the latest plans, the Charles River Conservancy will remain closely involved to make sure the funds provided by donors produce the skatepark we all have envisioned.

Over the past months, the CRC has also been working with the DCR to finalize a model for the operation and maintenance of the skatepark. The Conservancy is helped in this government relations effort by O'Neill Associates as well as by its legal advisor Bob Fitzpatrick from Wilmer Hale. Wilmer Hale is providing this service pro-bono.

On July 12th, the DCR announced that they will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a company or organization to operate and maintain the skatepark. The CRC has also been working with representatives of the skating community to enhance skaters' participation in areas such as training, volunteering, cleaning, as well as event organization.

Related recent developments in the vicinity of the skatepark

[New EF Building Next to Skatepark](#)

As of early June 2010, the City of Cambridge went on record in support of the plan of EF (Education First) and the Hult International Graduate School of Business to construct a building on the MassDOT surplus land next to the skatepark. The building will be similar in scale and design to the existing EF building. Plans show a café on the ground floor. This building will also provide the possibility to house a skate shop. Since EF already has the funding in place, this planning and development process is expected to move forward rapidly. EF offered to provide six tennis courts located just north of the skatepark. This will increase active use of the Parklands.

North Point Development

This spring a Delaware Court has ordered Boston and Maine Corp. to pay millions in damages and transfer its fee interest in the massive North Point multiuse development project to its former business partner, Cambridge North Point LLC. Legal experts say the development should finally clear the way for the long-delayed sale of project's assets and progress to development.

Summary

While concern over long-term maintenance due to the recession, among other things, has delayed the project, we are now at a better place than in 2008. Everybody – funders and skaters, appointed and elected officials, and, of course, the Charles River Conservancy – is anxious to see this park built. We think we have taken a dramatic step forward thanks to the strong partnership with DCR.