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Menino proposal calls for green space over Storrow

By Dan Salerno

MAYOR TOM MENINO IS PUSHING AN IDEA to cover parts of Storrow Drive with green space, granting more accessibility to the Charles River Esplanade and increasing the amount of open space available to the public.

In a speech last week, Menino proposed the idea, which would not require new tunnels like the Rose Kennedy Greenway. Instead, Menino's proposal calls for a wooden deck to be built over part of the highway, which would then be planted over.

"Think about this for a moment," Menino said in a speech last week. "We can reopen the river front to residents, connect the Charles River and the Public Garden, and create more green space in the heart of our downtown neighborhoods."

Local officials and community members have been working for months on ideas to repair the Storrow Drive tunnel along with the state's Department of Conservation and Recreation. Because the esplanade is owned by the state, and not the city, Menino's hands are tied without state involvement.

State representative Marty Walz said that she is open to discuss options for the Storrow tunnel, but that she has yet to see any significant details of the Mayor's proposal. According to Walz, the idea is similar to the Option D proposal drawn up by the DCR's Storrow Drive committee last year. That idea

also called for green space over Storrow, but was tabled due to logistical and cost issues. Walz said she had not seen any details that would differentiate the mayor's proposal from Option D.

"It's easier said than done," said Walz, who pointed out that extremely deep sod was needed to support green space. "It's not just a matter of building a deck and throwing some dirt on it."

Walz said that she was not opposed to the idea in theory, but a great deal more information was needed and that any proposals should take into account what the DCR committee discussed. "The Mayor's proposal should be folded into the work we've already done," she said.

A representative from the Charles River Conservancy said they were aware of the proposal but had yet to take a position on the project, awaiting further details.

The city and state will undertake about \$6 million in interim repairs to the Storrow tunnel this year while a permanent reconstruction project remains to be determined.

The proposal is the latest in a series of efforts to increase public space along the river. Earlier this year, the state's Charles River Conservancy offered up a proposal to close a portion of Storrow Drive to vehicle traffic on Sunday mornings to allow recreational use. ▀

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