



Mosquito Control Means Weighing Risk

By Meg Muckenhoupt

Nobody likes mosquitoes, but what can we do about them? Each year mosquitoes in Massachusetts cause disease and serious disabilities, even deaths. A beloved Raynham community leader's 2011 death from eastern equine encephalitis led to public demands for more aerial pesticide spraying—yet it's not clear that spraying more will actually reduce the number of people hurt.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (Mass DPH) has decided to recommend more pesticide spraying at a lower threshold of detected disease. However, the changes in the Mass DPH 2012 Response Plan for mosquito control are unlikely to have an effect in Belmont, which, like the rest of eastern Middlesex County, has an extensive mosquito control program. We are already dealing with an mosquito larvicide

and spraying and their effects—good and ill—on public health and the environment.

Mosquito Disease in Massachusetts

Although malaria hasn't been a serious threat to Belmont since the 1880s, two serious diseases are spread by mosquitoes in eastern Massachusetts: eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus (WNV). Both these diseases are known as arboviruses, for Arthropod (insect) Born viruses.

Of the two diseases, eastern equine encephalitis is much more worrisome. Although EEE is rare—typically Massachusetts sees two or fewer cases a year—it kills 30 to 50 percent of its victims and leaves many of the survivors with lifelong neurological disorders, according to Mass DPH. By contrast, 80 percent of people infected with WNV show no symptoms at all, and fewer than 1 percent of people who are infected

become severely ill.

Don't blame the horses. Although EEE includes equine ("horse" in Latin) in its name, both EEE and WNV are diseases of birds. EEE is carried mostly by the mosquito species *Culiseta melanura*, which breeds in water-filled holes under trees in swamps and feeds on songbirds. In the northeast, *C. melanura* mosquitoes generally live in hardwood swamps with white cedars and red maples. By contrast,

EASTERN MIDDLESEX MOSQUITO CONTROL PROJECT



The locus of Belmont's aerial mosquito larvicide spraying; the white area at the Waltham/Lexington boundary, south of Concord Avenue and the Belmont Country Club. The white star to the right is the locus of one of the Eastern Middlesex Mosquito Control Project mosquito trap sites in Belmont at the Habitat Audubon Sanctuary; mosquitoes are also trapped near Clay Pit pond and along Payson Road near Belmont Street.

WNV is carried by *Culex* genus mosquitoes, which commonly breed in urban areas in standing water in birdbaths, discarded tires, buckets, clogged gutters, or catch basins. *Culex* mosquitoes also prefer to feed on birds; WNV can be fatal to crows and blue jays. Although Mass DPH used to test dead birds for WNV, the agency stopped doing so in 2009. Testing birds didn't produce the information the Mass DPH wanted: whether the risk to humans was increasing.

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Belmont Citizens Forum Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that strives to maintain the small-town atmosphere of Belmont, Massachusetts, by preserving its natural and historical resources, limiting traffic growth, and enhancing pedestrian safety. We do this by keeping residents informed about planning and zoning issues, by participating actively in public hearings, and by organizing forums. Our *Newsletter* is published six times a year, in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Published material represents the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Belmont Citizens Forum. Letters to the editor may be sent to P. O. Box 609, Belmont MA 02478 or to info@belmontcitizensforum.org.

The problem for humans isn't that birds carry diseases; it's certain that they do. As long as the arboviruses are confined to bird-biting mosquitoes (and the birds themselves), humans won't get sick. The problem is that, unlike *Culiseta melanura* and *Culex* mosquitoes, some other species of mosquitoes will bite either birds or animals. These mosquito species—called “bridge vectors”—generally feed on animals, but will occasionally feed on birds. If they happen to bite a bird with either EEE or WNV, they may then visit humans, spreading arboviruses to mammals.

The Mass DPH monitors EEE and WNV in mosquito populations by testing samples of mosquitoes caught in traps. Under new guidelines, if two or more bridge vector mosquitoes with EEE are detected at a trap site, the Mass DPH considers that area to have a high probability of human EEE outbreak and recommends many responses—including possibly large-scale aerial spraying of pesticides.

Mosquito-Borne Diseases Rising

Eastern equine encephalitis is rare. Fewer than 100 cases have occurred in Massachusetts since it was first identified in 1938, and most of the victims lived in Norfolk or Plymouth counties. However, that's changing. Although the number of people infected with EEE is still very small, over the past two decades outbreaks have become more frequent.

Earlier this year, the Mass DPH convened an expert panel to review the cycle of EEE infections and ask why the cycle seems to be changing. The experts could not find a single cause that seems to be responsible for the change, but several factors seemed likely to contribute to having more infected bridge vectors reach humans, including:

- More people living near cedar swamp and cattail marsh mosquito habitats;
- Changes in the songbird population, especially of American robins, and changes in bird migration patterns;
- Climate change, including higher average temperatures and more precipitation during mosquito breeding times.

In short, the increase in EEE could be due to more people living nearer wetlands, or climate

change allowing more robins to overwinter in Massachusetts and feed mosquitoes, or a longer, wetter mosquito-breeding season. It's not at all clear; too many factors haven't been studied.

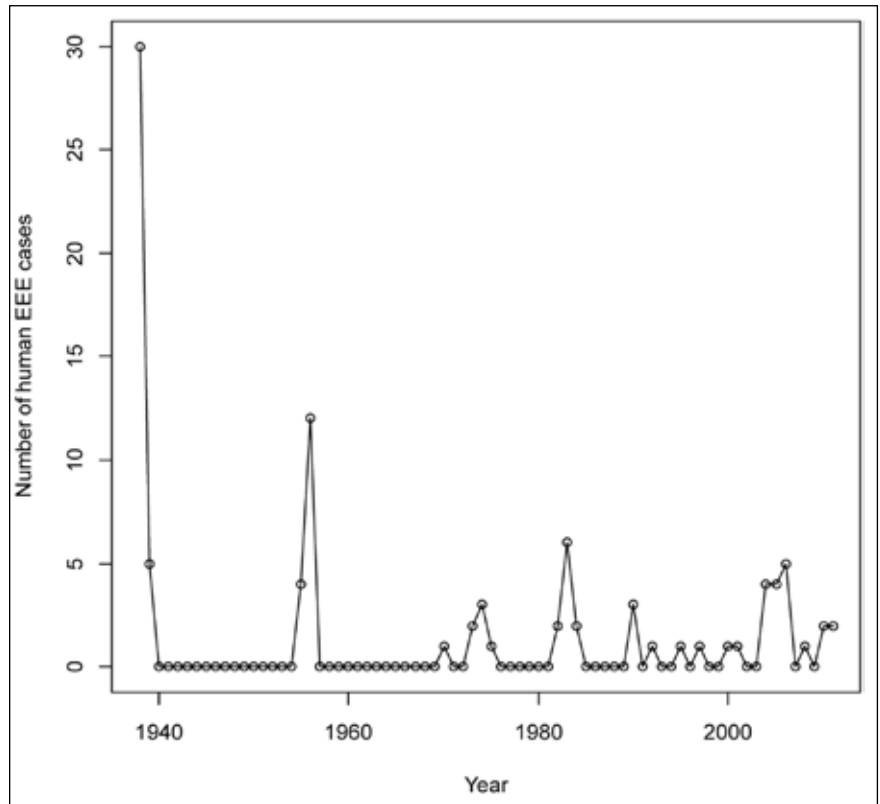
WNV, by contrast, arrived in Massachusetts in 2000 and has been present in the state ever since. Between 2000 and 2010, 67 people were reported with WNV infection in Massachusetts; six died. It is hard to tell what the long-term trends are for WNV with so little data.

Belmont's Mosquito Control

In Massachusetts, towns partner with state agencies to control mosquitoes on a regional basis. Belmont has worked for more than two decades with the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project (EMMCP), established in 1945, which serves 25 communities.

The EMMCP does a lot of work. According to Stefan Russakow, director of Belmont's Health Department, the EMMCP deposits larvicides—chemicals that kill mosquito larvae—in 2,000 catch basins in Belmont alone each year. The larvicide is added after the catch basins are cleaned in the late spring and early summer. Look for a stripe of paint next to your local catch basin to see if the EMMCP has been there this year. The EMMCP uses a bacteria called *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) to kill mosquito larvae. The rod-shaped bacterium produces a toxin that is only harmful to mosquitoes and blackfly larvae, and a few related noxious species. The EMMCP also monitors mosquito traps along the Belmont/Arlington line, where low-lying ponds and wetlands foster mosquitoes.

Russakow says the town responds to complaints about excessive mosquitoes by checking drainage and making sure drains are clear, but the town only gets 20 to 25 calls a year. "Typically we get calls by Sergi Farm [Belmont Acres] and in the Brookside area," Russakow said.



Graph of the number of cases of human eastern equine encephalitis by year. Although the absolute number of cases is not rising, outbreaks are becoming more frequent.

The EMMCP does do some aerial spraying of Bti in wetlands in Belmont along Concord Avenue near the Lexington border, and they have sprayed parts of the Belmont Country Club as well, according to Russakow.

The Problem with Mosquito Control

It's clear that mosquitoes cause human health risks, and that killing mosquitoes reduces human risk—but it can't eliminate it, and it does come at an environmental cost. But what cost?

The larvicide Bti is effective, and it only kills mosquito and blackfly larvae—but those larvae are part of the food supply for young amphibians in vernal pools. The Massachusetts Audubon web site calls mosquito control measures in suburban areas with large wetland areas "questionable" and notes, "The high reproductive rate and short life-cycle of mosquitoes may allow populations to evolve which are resistant to the pesticides, while local populations of mosquito predators (such as frogs, fish, and predatory insects) are less resilient."



A *Culiseta melanura* mosquito.

If the Mass DPH finds enough EEE-infected mosquitoes to say that risk is high, it will consider aerial spraying of adulticide (chemicals that kill adult mosquitoes). But that doesn't work for long: spraying adulticides only kills the current population of adult mosquitoes. During the summer, new batches of mosquitoes hatch every few days.

Adulticides are also far more harmful to other animals than larvicides. They don't kill just mosquitoes. In 1990, aerial spraying of malathion on 800,000 acres in southeastern Massachusetts in response to an EEE outbreak caused massive fish kills and also destroyed other insect species which eat mosquitoes such as dragonflies, according to the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

The EMMCP does not use malathion, but its arsenal of adulticides does include sumithrin, a pesticide generally toxic to bees and other insects. It can also poison fish, although the EMMCP web site claims that no fish kills have been attributed to "proper use" of sumithrin. Sumithrin is the primary ingredient in Anvil, the pesticide the Mass DPH will use if it chooses to start aerial spraying in response to heightened EEE risk.

Mass Audubon supports the Mass DPH's current plan for evaluating risk and deciding on spraying, said Heidi Ricci, Massachusetts

Audubon policy analyst, but "we'll be watching it closely." Mass Audubon is concerned about the ecological effects of spraying, especially ground-based spraying. "We'll get reports that all the crickets and katydids have disappeared in their neighborhoods [after spraying]," Ricci said. "There's no ecological monitoring of ground-based spraying." With no baseline measurements of insect life prior to spraying, there's no way to tell what the effect of the spraying was.

Ricci would like the Mass DPH to "sit down with MassWildlife [the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife]" to talk about how to monitor spraying and ensure that both wildlife and humans can stay healthy.

Meg Muckenhoupt is Editor of the Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter*.

Backyard Mosquito Prevention

Source: Eastern Middlesex Mosquito Control Project

"Anywhere water collects and remains stagnant for at least a week is a potential breeding site for mosquitoes. Containers most frequently found to breed mosquitoes are: rimless tires, infrequently used wading pools, water in loose fitting pool covers, uncovered boats, barrels, buckets, pet dishes, bird baths, wheel barrows, and vases...

"Remove or modify water-holding containers that may breed mosquitoes... Potential water holding containers such as rubbish barrels, buckets, wheelbarrows and small boats should be covered or stored upside down. The water in wading pools and birdbaths should be changed at least once a week. Infrequently used pools should be tightly covered or chlorinated. Barrels used by gardeners to collect rain-water should be emptied once a week or treated with Bti ["Mosquito dunks"]. . .as needed."

Will Belmont's Silver Maple Forest Be Saved?

By Anne-Marie Lambert

It's unlikely that either of the competing visions for the Uplands property—as housing or open space—will be realized any time soon. In the meantime, wildlife thrives in the Uplands site off Acorn Park Road. Invasive phragmites compete with native cattail and stag sumac for turf, and Asian carp compete with native herring and otter for food. Wildlife sightings continue: mink in a mating chase, wild turkeys breeding, red admiral butterflies migrating, and ruby-throated hummingbirds feeding on nectar.

In apparent frustration over delays, the property owner, Brian O'Neill, paid a May Day visit earlier this year to the Belmont Conservation Commission (BCC) to reiterate his intent to “cut down his trees and build his building.” In exchange for tree-planting and scholarship funds, O'Neill requested that the BCC drop its appeal over the project's alleged non-compliance with Stormwater Management Standard #3 of Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act regulations. O'Neill said the funds would otherwise be spent on legal fees to win the case.

The BCC explained that the commission is legally responsible for enforcing the Wetlands Protection Act and cannot trade that responsibility for other town benefits. The BCC then retired as usual into executive session to discuss the litigation in private.

O'Neill's vision of a 298-unit apartment complex on the Belmont Uplands site also must comply with the building permit conditions set by the Belmont Zoning Board of Appeals in 2007. Stephen Corridan, O'Neill project manager, stated in March that the building permit application meeting those conditions was almost complete and should be considered now.

Glenn Clancy, Belmont's Director of Community Development and the issuer of building permits, disagrees. In addition to completing several outstanding items, Clancy said he believes a building permit cannot be

issued until all environmental permits are final, including the Superseding Order of Conditions. But that Superseding Order of Conditions is not complete: a portion of the document is being appealed by the Belmont Conservation Commission. Clancy said he will be guided by Town Counsel.

Clancy still considers other items outstanding and incomplete, including:

- a signed version of the regulatory and monitoring agreement stating that all applicable permits and permissions have been obtained
- a signed Conservation Restriction
- an inflow/infiltration payment to the town of \$300,000 for sewer improvements
- validation that state approval under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act has not expired
- evidence that a tree-cutting plan has been delivered to the Zoning Board of Appeals
- consolidation of the Belmont and Cambridge land parcels into one lot.



White-tailed deer photographed at the Belmont Uplands.

ANDREW JOSLIN

Once the application is complete, Clancy plans to take time to review the entire application before issuing a building permit. Clancy is also tracking sewer-line maintenance issues.

An alternate vision for the Silver Maple Forest is to preserve it as open space. The political tide seems to be turning to preservation. Belmont's newest selectman, Andy Rojas, included preserving the Uplands in his election platform.

The Uplands is not just an isolated site with a few tall trees. It's a key and integral part of the habitat of the surrounding Alewife Reservation. On May 21, the Board of Selectmen received a resolution in support of land acquisition for preservation signed by 27 of the 36 Town Meeting Members in Precinct 8, which includes the Uplands property. Among the signatories was Anne Covino Goldenberg, a longstanding affordable housing advocate in Belmont who considers the Uplands inappropriate for housing.

At the same meeting, the Board of Selectmen were briefed in executive session by the BCC regarding the litigation. After that briefing, Chairman Mark Paolillo publicly expressed the board's support for future decisions by BCC and the board's willingness to meet with officials in Cambridge and Arlington about the Uplands.

This is the first time the Board of Selectmen has publicly supported preserving the Uplands since a 2004 unanimous resolution by the combined Arlington and Belmont Boards of

Selectmen in favor of open space preservation. Arlington's selectmen recently re-affirmed the 2004 resolution.

On June 18 at a public session of another Selectmen's meeting, Selectmen Mark Paolillo and Andy Rojas expressed their strong personal support for preserving the Uplands as open space, and Mark Paolillo repeated his intention of reaching out to officials in Cambridge and Arlington about the Uplands. Ralph Jones declined to comment.

The main challenge to open space preservation is lack of funding for buying the land (although O'Neill appears unwilling to sell) or investigating issues such as hydrology, FEMA regulations, and affordable housing alternatives. However, incremental steps can help. In February, the Mystic River Watershed Association issued a policy statement in support of the preserving the Uplands as open space. Patient analysis and integration of the complex engineering facts underlying the proposed development can help, too.

Even simple guided walks around the Uplands can get stakeholders and potential funding sources talking about the ecological significance of the Silver Maple Forest. There is still hope that an ecologically sound vision can become real.

Anne-Marie Lambert is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.



Map highlighting the location of the proposed Belmont Uplands development showing Route 2, Little Pond, the Little river, and portions of the Alewife Reservation.



GLENN KOENIG/OPEN EYES VIDEO

Flooding on Route 2 near Alewife, 2001

The Belmont Citizens Forum presents:

Stormwater Flooding Forum

Thursday, September 13, 7:30 p.m.

Winn Brook School, 97 Waterhouse Road, Belmont

Come hear expert panelists discuss facts and plans related to local and regional stormwater management. Come find your home on official FEMA maps showing flood patterns in the Winn Brook and other neighborhoods. Find out what difference citizen voices make to government decisions about the prevention of flooding and pollution caused by excess stormwater.

Panelists will include:

Kathy Baskin, Director of Water Policy, Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs:

Patrick Herron, Mystic Monitoring Network Director, Mystic River Watershed Association

Richard Vogel, Director of the Tufts program "Water: Systems, Science and Society"

Co-Sponsors:

Sustainable Belmont

Mystic River Watershed Association

Friends of Alewife Reservation

Somerville Community Path Extension in Flux

By John Dieckmann and Lynn Weissman

Advocates are working to make sure the Community Path Extension, the last 2.3 mile segment of the Mass Central Rail Trail from Somerville to Boston, gets built—and that path's fate is tied up with the MBTA's planned Green Line Extension project. That project is looking more hopeful: in June, the Green Line Extension was placed on a master list of transportation projects that the Federal Transit Administration is considering for federal funding under the "New Starts" program.

The proposed Community Path extension will connect the Minuteman and Charles River path networks, completing almost 50 miles of connecting paths through 11 cities and towns.

The proposed Community Path extension (CPX) will connect the Minuteman and Charles River path networks, completing almost 50 miles of connecting paths through 11 Boston metro area cities and towns. Once the Mass Central Rail Trail is completed through Belmont and Waltham to Berlin, the paths will also connect with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the Assabet River Rail Trail.

Since 2001, there has been an effort to extend the existing Somerville Community Path from Cedar Street east of Davis Square to Cambridge and the edge of Boston, near the Science Museum. This extension, the CPX, reaches the Lowell commuter rail right of way 1,400 feet beyond Cedar Street.

The CPX would use underutilized space in the wide commuter rail corridor from North Station toward the north suburbs along the same right of way that the Green Line Extension will use. In densely developed Somerville, the Lowell right of way is the only feasible route for the CPX to reach Boston.

The fates of the Green Line Extension (GLX) and CPX are thus intertwined. It is essential that the GLX light rail extension and the CPX rail trail be designed together so both fit within their shared corridor. Though no money has been provided yet for the CPX, advocacy by the Friends of the Community Path and support for the Path from the Somerville City government have resulted in some short sections of the CPX being added to GLX station design.

Green Line Extension Due to Big Dig

The GLX will extend the MBTA's Green Line subway from its current terminus at Lechmere through Somerville and into Medford. The GLX in one form or another has been under discussion since the early 1960s, but the genesis of the current project was the Big Dig. In obtaining permits for the Central Artery Project (the "Big Dig") in the early 1990s, the state committed to expanding transit to mitigate the added tailpipe emissions from the increase in Interstate 93 traffic once the Central Artery's capacity was increased. One of these pollution-mitigation projects was the GLX to Medford. GLX planning started in earnest in 2005.

The Green Line will be extended from Lechmere through Somerville to Route 16 in Medford. As part of the project, Lechmere Station will be relocated to the east side of the O'Brien Highway (Route 28) in Cambridge.

Planning for the GLX is now approaching the 30 percent design stage, with the route and the location of stations established.

Recent public hearings have focused on the detailed design of individual stations with an emphasis on efficient access between each station and the surrounding neighborhood, including the CPX. Completion of a detailed design is scheduled for several years from now, when construction of the GLX will begin.

In the first phase, the GLX will be constructed between Washington Street and Union Square stations by 2016; it will be extended to the College Avenue Station by 2020. The extension to Route 16 will be delayed. According to a

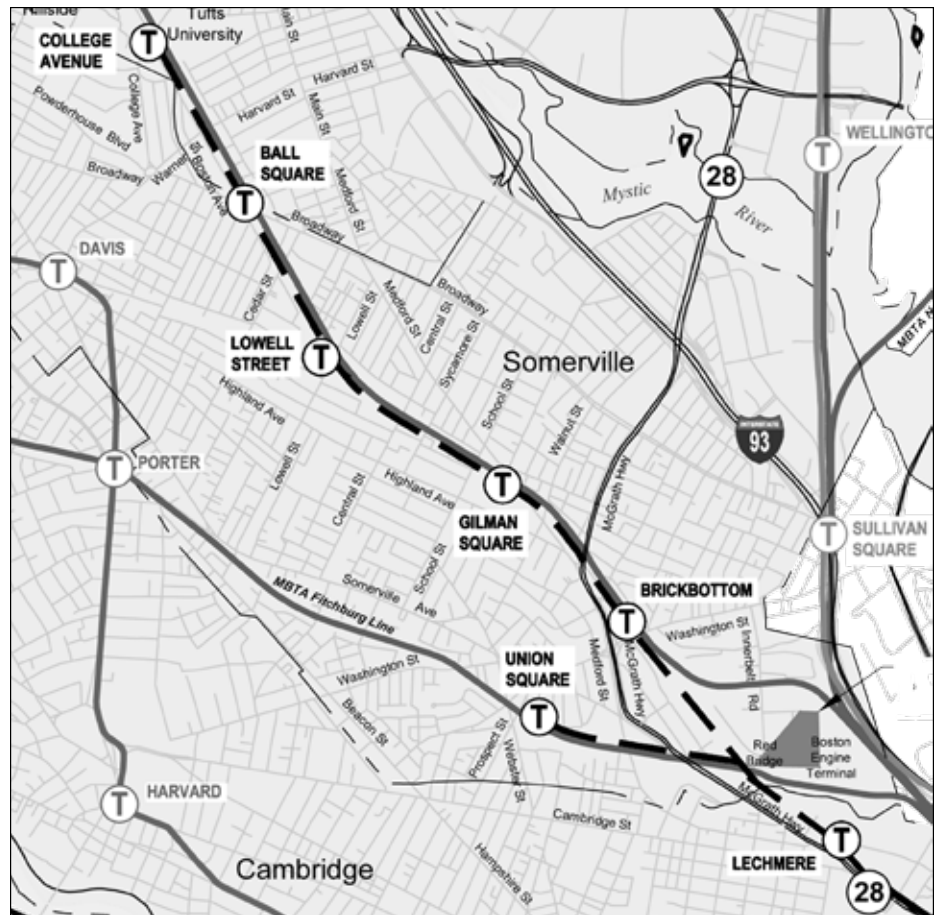
spokesman at the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, “the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization voted to use a separate pot of federal funds to build the segment of the Green Line from College Avenue to Route 16. That process has not yet begun, and will require additional environmental review, design, and construction. It will be done as a *separate* effort from the main portion of the Green Line Extension to College Avenue.”

The total budget for the GLX is \$1.3 billion. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation has created an extensive web site covering the project at greenlineextension.eot.state.ma.us.

The GLX design now includes two short sections of the CPX at Gilman Square station and from Washington Street to Poplar/Fitchburg Streets (near Brickbottom). There will be direct access from the Community Path to both the Gilman Square and Washington Street stations; these short path segments—a few hundred feet—will be built as part of the GLX. The GLX design team, HDR/Gilbane, said that designing these CPX sections as part of the GLX stations solves many access challenges.

The 1400-foot CPX section from Cedar Street to Lowell Street will be built in 2013. The design of the GLX station at Lowell Street includes bicycle parking, since many cyclists will approach the station via the upcoming Cedar-to-Lowell Street CPX section. This section is especially significant since the Lowell Street end will be the first part of the CPX to dovetail with the GLX route. MassDOT is planning a second GLX public design meeting focusing on the CPX design in summer 2012 (date TBA).

By contrast, the rest of the proposed CPX is far from fully funded for the ca.\$20 million needed for design and construction along this route. So far the state has committed to



A map of the planned Green Line Extension (black dotted line).

funding CPX design from Lowell Street to Inner Belt Road in Somerville, but not most of the CPX construction. The state also has not funded either design or construction of the CPX from Inner Belt Road to the existing paths at Lechmere/North Point in Cambridge.

Massachusetts is asking the federal government to pay \$557 million for the Green Line extension, or about 42 percent of the total \$1.3 billion cost. So far, the MBTA has not included funding for the CPX in their application for federal New Start funds—even though adding the CPX would cost little, and make the GLX accessible to walkers and bikers, a true multi-modal project.

The Friends of the Community Path have had significant input to the inclusion of the CPX and bicycle/pedestrian access in the GLX station designs. Learn more at www.facebook.com/FriendsoftheCommunityPath.

John Dieckmann is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum. Lynn Weissman is Co-President of the Friends of the Community Path.

Western Greenway Trail Work Continues

By Roger Wrubel

For over a decade volunteers working under the umbrella moniker of “Friends of the Western Greenway,” have worked to transform a collection of private and public lands with a hodge-podge of trails into a significant regional trail system. The volunteers came from the the Belmont Citizens Forum, the Waltham Land Trust, Citizens of Lexington for Conservation, the Lexington Land Stewards, the New England Mountain Bike Association, and Mass Audubon. I am happy to report that progress continues.

The Western Greenway spans over 1100 acres of interconnected green space in Belmont, Waltham, and Lexington. The goal is to create a circular Western Greenway Trail of upwards of 12 miles with several spur trails.

The Western Greenway spans over 1100 acres of interconnected green space in Belmont, Waltham, and Lexington.

In 2011 the Friends of the Western Greenway built two new trails in state-managed land connecting the Beaver Brook North Reservation to Shady’s Pond Conservation Area in Waltham, across Trapelo Road. The Waltham Land Trust negotiated agreements with the Waltham Y and one of two condominium associations allowing the Western Greenway Trail to cross their properties. Agreement with the second condo association is very close to completion; when that agreement is executed, a 6.5 mile trail from Belmont’s Habitat Audubon Sanctuary to the Robert Treat Paine Estate and Storer Conservation Land in Waltham will be marked



Volunteers construct a boardwalk at Shady’s Pond, Waltham.

ROGER WRUBEL

with the Western Greenway Trail blaze and open to the public.

In November 2011, a hastily called trails day was needed to clear the damage caused by the October storm. It also gave volunteers the opportunity to install two benches with beautiful views on the long boardwalk crossing the wetland west of the Avalon Lexington Hills development in Lexington (former Met State Hospital campus). Finally, in 2011 work began to clear the abandoned rail line south of the Lyman Estate in Waltham. That trail will extend east to the corner of Waverley Oaks Road and Beaver Street in Waltham. A section of abandoned rail line south of the Lyman estate was also cleared.

Scheduled work for 2012 includes, continued clearing of the rail trail, construction of a boardwalk west of the Waltham Y, and trail improvement on a trail from the Paine Estate parking lot to Beaver Street, which will eventually lead to the Lyman Estate. If you wish be placed on the trail volunteer mailing list send an e-mail to habitat@massaudubon.org.

Roger Wrubel is director of the Mass Audubon Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary in Belmont.

Letter to the Editor

Re: ["New Trapelo Road Corridor Coming Soon," Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter*, March/April 2012.] : I must say the part about [the] Trapelo Road reconstruction did not impress me. I think the whole idea espoused by you and the Mass DOT [is] wrongheaded...To devote 24 percent of the available roadway space to the use of bicycles and only 35 percent to passenger cars and trucks is preposterous.

Are the...options in your [newsletter] already obsolete? I notice that in Cambridge on Concord Avenue, they have adapted a different concept. Rather than mix car/truck lanes with bike lanes, they have separated them... They put the bike path right up next to a widened sidewalk, so both are away from traffic. To me that makes sense...

Both cars and bikes will increase in the future, but to add so much space for bicyclists at the expense of cars and trucks is over the top....

I think a median with flowering trees in the middle similar to Concord Avenue is the way to go.

Sincerely,
Robert D. Sullivan
Belmont, MA

Sumner Brown responds:

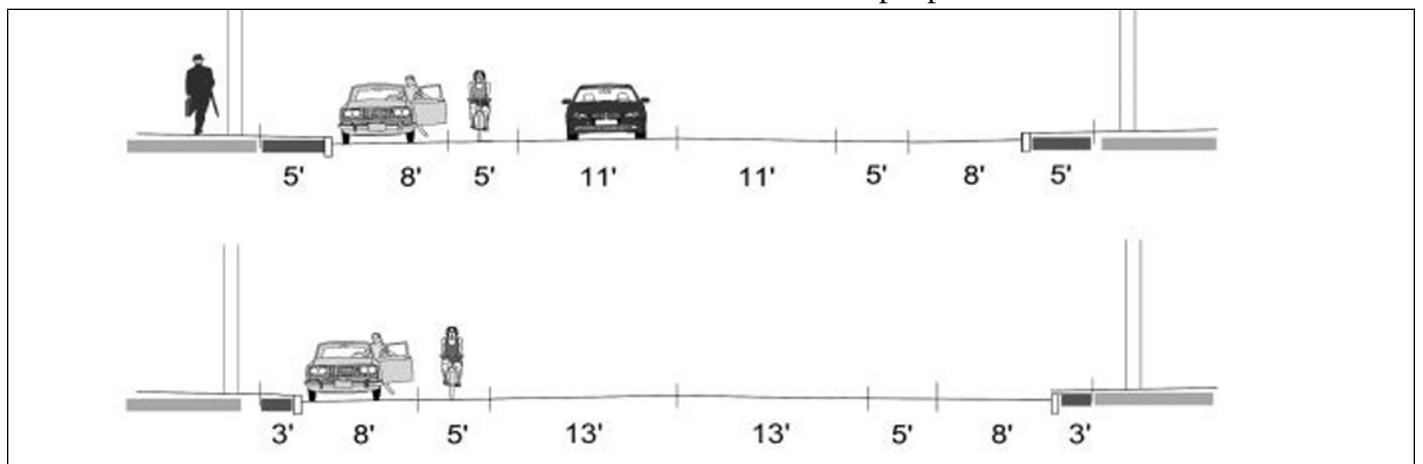
The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is not to blame for the new Trapelo Road design. All of the initial ideas, engineering designs, and cost estimates came from efforts of Belmont residents and Belmont town staff.

The process began about 10 years ago. Several independent Belmont initiatives searched for ways to help local businesses and to make Trapelo Road more pleasant. Both the town and the Belmont Citizens Forum (BCF) started that process, as described in the article.

The town hired an engineering company to make preliminary plans, called 25 percent design plans, which were presented to MassDOT for their review. MassDOT makes sure designs developed by local communities meet certain standards; for example, the level of service of the reconstructed Trapelo Road must be at least as good as the present road. There were two public meetings about the road sponsored by the BCF before the 25 percent design phase, and Belmont's Traffic Advisory Committee also held many meetings on the project.

Once the preliminary design passed MassDOT's review, Belmont paid an engineering firm to produce the next level "75 percent" design, with more complete details and cost estimates. MassDOT then reviewed this 75 percent design. Based on that review, final construction documents were prepared.

At every step the town produced the designs and cost estimates. MassDOT's role is to check our plans against their guidelines for transportation planning and road construction. MassDOT will also solicit bids for the work. If cost estimates are low by more than 10 percent, the town will be responsible for paying for the cost overruns. Trapelo Road will devote less real estate to motor vehicles and more to bicycles because of the mechanics of traffic flow. Much of the area now given to cars and trucks serves no useful purpose. Oversized traffic lanes do not



Two possible cross-sections for the future Trapelo Road.

help vehicles move through bottlenecks such as Waverley Square. Think of what happens when construction or an accident closes lanes on an interstate. The multiple lanes upstream from the bottleneck become a parking lot.

Also, Mr. Sullivan's figures are incorrect. The 75 percent plans have five-foot-wide bicycle lanes in each direction. A typical two-lane section of redesigned Trapelo Road will have 13 percent of the width devoted to bikes (not 24 percent), 32 percent for motor vehicle travel, and 21 percent to motor vehicle parking; the remaining space is taken up by sidewalks. Sections with turning lanes or four travel lanes will have a larger percentage devoted to motor vehicles.

As for raised sidewalk-level bicycle lanes; they only work well if the bicycle lanes don't cross roads and driveways. With frequent intersections, accidents increase because cyclists have problems seeing cars entering driveways, and drivers don't watch for cyclists crossing the

street. Cambridge's Concord Avenue sidewalk-level inbound lane works well because there is a 0.7 mile stretch between the Belmont boundary and the Fresh Pond traffic circle, with only one driveway and no cross streets. The outbound side is crossed by many roads and driveways, so a raised lane wouldn't work.

The raised level bicycle lane also would not work for Trapelo Road due to frequent intersections. What is an attractive bike path design at Concord Avenue inbound would be slow and dangerous on Trapelo.

Trees indeed make Concord Avenue attractive. Hundreds of new trees and shrubs will also make Trapelo Road more attractive. They will be placed on the sides of the street, not in a median. This placement favors foot traffic, which in turn will most benefit the people who live near and shop on Trapelo Road.

Belmont Farmers Market Returns for Seventh Season

The Belmont Farmers' Market, now in its seventh season, is open in Belmont Center Thursdays from 2–6:30 p.m. through October—rain or shine! The Market features an exciting variety of locally grown and sourced foods, from fresh produce to local wines. Look for cheeses, meats, cut flowers, sauces and dips, baked goods, candies, and more. The Market is accepting SNAP benefits again this year.

Sign up for weekly e-mail updates at belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com. Visit www.belmontfarmersmarket.com for complete Market information, including vendor listings and volunteer opportunities.

The Belmont Farmers' Market is a project of the Belmont Food Collaborative Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. The Market is a partnering organization of Cool Belmont, a Sustainable Belmont initiative, and a member of the Belmont Center Business Association.



BELMONT FARMERS' MARKET

Is it Time to Embrace the Parking Lot?

Review: *ReThinking a Lot*, by Eran Ben-Joseph. MIT Press, 2012.

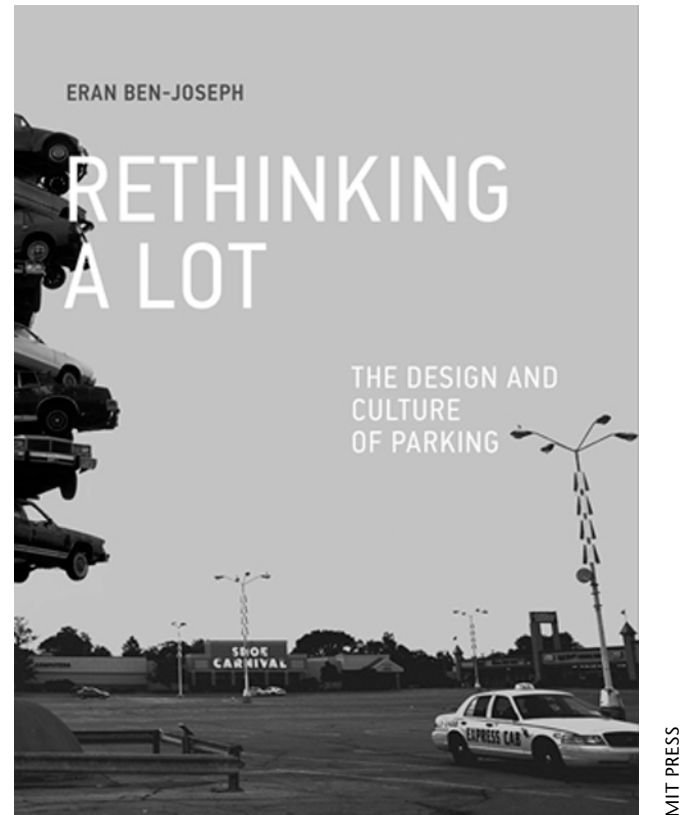
By Jason Schrieber

Can you think of an attractive parking lot? Some would ask, “why would you?” However, we spend a lot of time in parking lots, and most of them are dismal expanses of pavement with little amenity or beauty, as Eran Ben-Joseph, professor of landscape architecture and urban planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, points out in his recent book, *ReThinking a Lot*. Ben-Joseph questions what few seem to question: why have we ignored this mainstay of American life? Most Americans use them daily, yet after many decades, parking lot design has improved negligibly.

In a great overview of a vast amount of parking-related literature, Ben-Joseph points out that nobody really celebrates parking lot design. Streets, alleys, paths, and even parking garages all have had much written about them, and much attention is given to their continual improvement, yet parking lots are used just as much and get little attention. The subtle premise of *ReThinking a Lot* is that it is time to begin embracing these spaces—places that remarkably consume more land in many of our downtowns than any other land use.

Ben-Joseph does not build a lengthy argument for rushing to change parking lots all across the land. Rather, he lets the reader debate these overlooked pieces of our lives through a three-part overview of parking: the impact parking has on daily life; the history of how we got to have so many ugly parking lots; and some of the better practices taken today to soften their blow. The result is an entertaining survey of parking lots, from their environmental impacts to social equity impacts, from the historic beginnings of parking your horse to recent installations of “back-in angle” parking, and from environmental “bio-swale” treatments to activist “PARK(ing) Day.”

While this structure is more encyclopedic than narrative, the effect is like several vignettes



strung together in an often funny, beautifully illustrated work nearly 150 pages long. To think that a book on parking lots could be termed beautiful or funny is a testament to the book’s clever design.

More importantly, *ReThinking a Lot* is a worthwhile read for most people who just simply don’t think about parking that much—if only to consider just briefly its unseen dominance of our daily lives, economy, environment, and indeed our culture. It may get you to think a bit more about this pervasive urban form.

Of course, Ben-Joseph’s premise that we should pay more attention to the design of parking lots is not directly proven through this work. He hopes the facts paint the picture themselves. Some may still question the value of making parking lots aesthetically pleasing when maybe there should simply be fewer of them. But perhaps that’s Ben-Joseph’s point.

Jason Schrieber is a certified planner and Principal at Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates’ Boston office. His most recent article is “Smart Parking Revisited” in the May 2012 *Planning Magazine*.

Environmental Events

Little River Nature Walk with Anne-Marie Lambert

Saturday, July 14, 9:30-11:30 a.m. and Sunday, July 22, 4-6 p.m.

Anne-Marie Lambert, a board member of the Belmont Citizens Forum will be offering a beautiful nature walk along the Little River. Information: amlambert@gmail.com. *Alewife Park Greenway parking lot near the Route 2 end of Acorn Park Drive in Cambridge.*

Circle the City

Sunday, July 15, 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

MassBike will be hosting a day in the sun, where cycling lovers can ride amongst friends between Franklin Park and Jamaica Pond. Bike, walk, or jog along for a Sunday afternoon. Information: massbike.org, austin@massbike.org. *Franklin Park, Walnut Street, Boston.*

MassRecycle Summer Tours

Tuesday, July 17, 11 a.m. and Wednesday, July 25, 10:30 a.m.

MassRecycle will offer tours of two recycling facilities this summer. On July 17, visit the Casella's Materials Recovery Facility in Charlestown and see how the highly automated Zero-Sort facility separates out comingled recyclables. On July 25, tour Jordan Dairy Farms in Rutland and see the anaerobic digester and composting facilities. Fee: free to MassRecycle members, \$10 nonmembers per tour. Information: massrecyclespaper.wufoo.com/forms/w7w6m7/, info@massrecycle.org, (617) 338-0244. *Location given with registration.*

Spy Pond Work Day

Saturday, July 21, 1-4 p.m.

Sustainable Arlington and Friends of Spy Pond Park sponsor a work day in Spy Pond Park suitable for garden and nature lovers, children, and high school students looking for community service hours. Information: www.sustainablearlington.org, dabirming@gmail.com, (781) 641-2392. *Spy Pond Park, between Linwood Street and Pond Lane off Mass Avenue, East Arlington.*



ANDREW JOSLIN

Red-tailed hawk, Alewife Reservation

Insects and Ice Cream

Wednesday, August 1, 6-7 p.m.

Join the Habitat's staff for a bug treasure hunt and ice cream. Fee: \$7 members, \$9 non-members. Registration required. Information: www.massaudubon.org, habitat@massaudubon.org, (617) 489-5050. *Mass Audubon Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road, Belmont.*

Arlington Storm Water Awareness Series

Tuesday, August 14, 7-8 p.m.

Patrick Herron, the MyRWA's Water Quality Monitoring Director, will lecture on the impact of the surrounding environment on stormwater, runoff, households and businesses. Free. Information: www.arlingtonma.gov/Public_Documents/ArlingtonMA_DPW/engineering/stormwater/index. *Arlington Town Hall, 730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington.*

Boston GreenFest 2012

Thursday, August 16–Saturday, August 18

Boston GreenFest begins on the 16th with live performances and continues until Saturday. There will be exhibits and workshops on green products

Talk and Tour of the Western Greenway
Wednesday, September 5, 7-9 p.m.
 Come and learn about this protected wildlife habitat in Belmont's back yard. The Western Greenway which traverses Belmont, Lexington, and Waltham hosts miles of nature trails. Sponsored by Sustainable Belmont, the Belmont Citizens Forum, and the Waltham Land Trust. *Avalon Apartments auditorium, 100 Lexington Ridge Drive, Lexington.*

Expert panelists will talk about the facts and effects of pollution and flooding caused by excess storm water. This event provides an opportunity for citizens to find out the difference they can make on government decisions related to storm water management. Free and open to all. Co-sponsored by the Belmont Citizens Forum: see page 7. Information: belmontcitizensforum.org. *Winn Brook Elementary School cafeteria, 97 Waterhouse Road, Belmont.*

If you can volunteer even a few hours a month, you can make a difference. You do not need to be an expert—just a person who cares about our town.

- _____ Archaeology & Historic Preservation
- _____ Environmental Protection
- _____ Planning & Zoning
- _____ Community Path
- _____ Walking in Belmont
- _____ Mailings
- _____ Newsletter

It costs about \$4,000 to publish each issue of our newsletter. Please donate for this purpose:

Make checks payable to ***Belmont Citizens Forum*** and mail to Belmont Citizens Forum, P.O. Box 609, Belmont MA 02478.

If you have questions, please e-mail us at info@belmontcitizensforum.org. The Belmont Citizens Forum is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Your donation is deductible from federal taxes to the full extent provided by law.

Belmont Citizens Forum
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