



WALK WINTHROP:

A GREENWAY ACTION PLAN

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program and the Unified Planning Work
Program

Prepared for the
Town of Winthrop

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EMBRACING WINTHROP

Winthrop is a coastal town of urban character located on a peninsula framing Boston Harbor. With a population of 17,497 in an area of 1.6 square miles, Winthrop is one of the most compact communities in Massachusetts. Access to the town is provided by only 3 locations; Main St via East Boston, Revere St via Revere, and ferry service via the ferry terminal.

The Orient Heights MBTA station is located $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of the closest Winthrop border access on Main St. Two bus routes operated by Paul Revere Transportation connect the station to Point Shirley and all points in between. Ferry service to Rowes Wharf in Boston runs from May to October during peak commute times with limited weekend service.

Practically surrounded by water, ocean and marsh views are plentiful throughout town. All points in the town are no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the Atlantic Ocean or Boston Harbor. In other words, from any location in town, one can walk to the shoreline in less than 15 minutes.



MOVING FORWARD

A compact community, expansive natural resources, and convenient public transportation all create the conditions for a healthy and vibrant community that can be connected by cycling and walking.

The entire Town of Winthrop and connections to Orient Heights and East Boston are all within the average cycling or walking distance. Most walk trips are typically less than 1 mile and are more often less than ½ mile. Most bicycle trips are under 5 miles. Both a 1 mile walk and 5 mile bicycle trip take about 20 minutes.

The Orient Heights MBTA station and the Point Shirley neighborhood are both about 1 ½ miles from Winthrop town center. From Point Shirley to the Revere town line is about 2 ½ miles apart, the longest distance to travel from one point to another. The town center is ½ mile from both the Atlantic Ocean to the east and Boston Harbor to the west, a 10 minute walk.

The town of Winthrop has embraced the idea of creating a more bikeable and walkable community. Implementing positive improvements to the cycling and walking network will create a number of benefits:

- Healthier active community
- Regional destination for tourism, creating economic development potential
- Sustainable alternative to driving for short trips

This report recommends an implementation plan for moving forward the Walk Winthrop proposal and expands on the plan with additional recommendations to implement the cycling and walking network.

Specifically, the town has identified adding bicycle parking, improving street conditions for cycling, implementing a bike share program, applying for the Safe Routes to School program, and developing a trail network as priority areas to address.

Bicycle Parking

Winthrop has installed 129 bicycle parking spaces throughout the town in 24 locations including shopping districts, schools, and parks. The bike racks were funded through the MAPC Bike Parking Program and the Town.



FIGURE 1 BIKE PARKING AT THE WINTHROP FERRY

Bicycle Accommodation

There are currently no bike lanes or other bicycle specific infrastructure in the town with the exception of the new bike racks. However construction at the two road entrances to Winthrop provide an opportunity to improve bicycle accommodation.

Working with the City of Boston, the town has identified the Saratoga St/Main St corridor between Orient Heights station and Pleasant St for striping bike lanes. A formal letter of request by the Town of Winthrop and City of Boston has been submitted to MassDOT requesting a project revision to include bicycle lanes in the final striping.

The DCR is currently in the final phases of reconstructing the seawall and roadway at the Winthrop/Revere border. Implementation of bicycle accommodation and a clear pedestrian crosswalk on Revere St is of high priority.

Striping bicycle lanes on arterial streets is a recommended solution where space exists. Most arterial streets in the town are 34-36 ft wide, with parking on one side. At least 38 ft of width is required for bike lanes. However shared lane markings may be applied on narrower sections.

Veterans Rd is one of few streets in Winthrop that has the potential for striping bike lanes. . In addition, the section of Winthrop St between Magee's Corner and Metcalf Square that is planned as a TIP project in the next several years should potentially accommodate bike lanes.

A thorough inventory of the towns' arterial streets and select connecting streets has recently been undertaken using Chapter 90 funding. This inventory identifies curb to curb widths for all streets in town. Accordingly, this document should be thoroughly reviewed in order to identify opportunities to provide bicycle lanes where possible. Where bike lanes are not feasible due to width constraints, use of shared lane markings should be considered. All future roadway projects including paving overlays shall implement any identified opportunities for improved bicycle accommodation.



FIGURE 2 MAIN ST



FIGURE 3 SEAWALL CONSTRUCTION

Bike Share

The entire town of Winthrop plus Orient Heights Station and Deer Island are all within 3 miles end to end. This is an ideal cycling distance and one that would benefit from a bicycle sharing program that residents and visitors alike can benefit from. With the highly successful launch of the Hubway system in Boston, Winthrop is eager to join in the system as it expands across the harbor.

Boston and Winthrop have already agreed in concept to work together to expand Hubway across the Harbor. A critical mass of stations is required to develop a separate operation in East Boston and beyond. Collaboration with neighboring communities such as Revere, Chelsea, Everett, and Massport to develop a more regional integrated bike share system may be beneficial.

The cost of implementing Hubway is currently in the range of \$50,000 to \$80,000 for a typical station. This estimate includes 3 years of operating costs, as well as 10 bikes, and 20 docks per station. A four station network would therefore cost approximately \$300,000.

The town should begin the process of identifying funds for a bike share system including private donations and public revenue sources. The town can follow Boston's lead in successfully soliciting funding from a variety of sources, limiting the town's initial required capital outlay.

The Town, in collaboration with MAPC, has developed a set of proposed first phase of station locations for a bike share system with connections to Boston.

PROPOSED STATION LOCATIONS

- Orient Heights MBTA Station (Boston)
– essential to serve a bike share system in Winthrop
- Winthrop Town center (French Square)
– Jefferson St @ Hagman Rd
- Winthrop Beach – Winthrop Shore Dr
@ Crest Ave
- Winthrop Ferry Terminal – Terrace Ave
- Point Shirley/Deer Island – Tafts Ave (possibly on the Boston side of the line)



FIGURE 4 FRENCH SQUARE



FIGURE 5 TYPICAL HUBWAY STATION

Safe Routes to Schools

Winthrop is working with MassRIDES to enroll the Cummings and Gorman Fort Banks Schools in the Safe Routes to Schools program. This national initiative aims to increase the health and mobility of school-aged children, particularly at the elementary level, by encouraging more biking and walking to school. Other potential outcomes from participating in the Safe Routes program include the reduction of congestion, air pollution, and traffic conflicts near participating schools.

This partnership allows the Town access to technical assistance for designing, implementing, marketing, and evaluating initiatives that are tailored to each school's needs and priorities as well as free promotional and educational materials. It also may provide funding opportunities to make sidewalk and roadway improvements along the corridors that lead to these areas

Walk Winthrop

The Conway School of Landscape Design developed the Walk Winthrop report in 2010 that recommends developing a network of walking and cycling routes throughout the town that connects commercial districts, municipal services, natural resources, and transportation hubs. The Town is eager to embrace the idea of a trail network, the details of which are described in the next section.

ACTION STEPS

1. Identify street widths on all major streets in the town for potential striping of bike lanes. Where bike lanes are not an option, consider shared lane markings and alternative routes for cycling that connect all entry points of the town (Orient Heights/Main St, Revere St, Ferry Terminal) as well as Point Shirley.
2. Develop a bicycle network implementation plan, with an eye toward integrating the street paving cycle and major construction projects.
3. Work with MassDOT and the City of Boston to ensure the striping plan for the Main St bridge currently under construction will include bike lanes.
4. Work with DCR to ensure that current construction on Revere St at Short Beach accommodates adequate bicycle and pedestrian access.
5. Seek and identify funding for the Hubway bike share system in the town. Funding sources may include private donations, foundations, grants, and public revenue streams.
6. Work with MAPC, the City of Boston, and Alta BikeShare to implement Hubway.

INTRODUCING WALK WINTHROP

The vision of the Walk Winthrop Greenway is a network of signed and marked urban trails that connect the town's natural resources including its beaches, views, and parks with transportation systems and civic and business districts. The Greenway will encourage residents to walk and bike, thereby increasing health benefits, and replacing vehicle trips. The Greenway will help position Winthrop as a destination for many visitors from the Boston region and beyond to visit the town to explore its attractions and boost local economic development.

A key tourism potential resides in the proposed Boston Harbor to Winthrop Loop where one may take the MBTA to Maverick Station, hop on a Hubway (or their own bicycle) and ride along the East Boston Greenway to Constitution Beach, continue into Winthrop, head down Winthrop Shore Drive and Yirrell Beach to Point Shirley, circle Deer Island, stop for a meal in Delby's Corner or French Square, and return to the ferry terminal to head back to Rows Wharf in Boston.

MAPC and its partners are beginning the process of developing a regional greenway system that will connect throughout the Boston metropolitan region. We propose that the East Boston Greenway and extension into Winthrop to Deer Island be a key route as part of this system, and therefore the top priority route for implementation in the Town.

Routes

Three proposed main routes form the backbone of the Winthrop Greenway and are outlined on Figure 5. The routes have been selected to take advantage of key desirable attributes of walking and cycling.

- Traffic free and low traffic routes where possible
- Maximum visibility and access to water views, parks, and other open spaces
- Connections to Boston, primarily the Orient Heights MBTA station and the East Boston Greenway
- Access to the new ferry terminal and service to Boston
- Connect to restaurants, shops, schools, and other services within the town

The three main routes that are proposed are the Ocean Route (regional greenway), Harbor Route, and the Town Center Route. The routes are summarized below.

Ocean Route (Regional Greenway)

This route is the top priority for implementation and the crown jewel of the Walk Winthrop Greenway. The route also serves as part of the regional greenway system and extension of the East Boston Greenway.

From Constitution Beach and Orient Heights station, the route follows Bayswater St in Boston to Annavoy St to Saratoga St. The route crosses the Belle Island Marsh channel into Winthrop as it changes to Main St. Left onto Pleasant St to Morton St. At Morton St, the route follows a future trail connection from Banks St along Belle Isle Marsh to the Winthrop Cemetery, through DCR parkland to Revere St. The route then follows a stone seawall (proposed future upgrade to a path) to Nahant Ave. The route then follows residential streets to an existing path along Winthrop Beach. The path connects to Winthrop Shore Dr and Yirrell Beach south to Point Shirley. An alternate route along Cottage Hill provides sweeping views and a closeup of the iconic Winthrop water tower and stairway leading back down to the beach. Future path construction is proposed along missing gaps along Yirrell Beach.

Harbor Route

This route follows the Boston Harbor (west) side of Winthrop with views of downtown Boston and Logan Airport.

Starting at Main St, this route follows Pleasant St to Court Road, following neighborhood streets to the old narrow gauge railroad trestle. The route then crosses Washington St through Thornton Park to the golf course and Lewis Lake. The route then reconnects with the other end of the trestle at Delby's Corner, and business district along Shirley St to the ferry terminal and south around Coughlin Park to Deer Island.

Town Center Route

This is the shortest proposed route running through the heart of Winthrop connecting Ingleside Park, EB Newton Cultural Center, French Square, and the golf course. The northern terminus connects with the Ocean Route, and southern terminus links up with the Harbor Route.

Branching off the Ocean Route at Fairview St, this route follows south to Main St and Read St to Ingleside Park. The route follows existing paths in the park to Walden St and Hagman Rd to the center at French Square. Then it follows Jefferson St to Madison St and the Cemetery. The route cuts through the cemetery to Buchanan St to the golf course. A future connection would travel through the edge of the golf course property to the Lewis Lake path system and the Harbor Route.



Implementation Priorities

The identified routes as described above include gaps in the system that could eventually provide the ideal traffic free cycling and walking route. The following is a list by route of the infrastructure improvements that are proposed to complete the gaps.

Completion of the Ocean Route is the top priority. However as opportunities arise to complete sections of other routes, those should be considered as well.



FIGURE 6 GAPS IN THE WALK WINTHROP GREENWAY

OCEAN ROUTE (Regional Greenway)

The Ocean Route as proposed includes four gaps where paths should be constructed. Interim alternate routes are available and are described as follows.

BELLE ISLE MARSH

In 2000, a section of the Winthrop Greenway was developed from the East Boston border at Morton St, down Banks Street, across to the Winthrop Cemetery, along Belle Isle Marsh, ending on Bayou Street. Due to its location on a tidal marsh, the trail was not maintained between Banks Street and the Cemetery.

Project – Construct a trail and boardwalk (where needed) along the south side of the marsh between Pleasant St and Banks St with a footbridge connecting to the existing path around the cemetery.



FIGURE 7 WINTHROP GREENWAY 2000 SIGN



DETERIORATED FOOTBRIDGE AT HIGH TIDE

SHORT BEACH

The seawall along Short Beach is located on a vacant street right-of-way. It is currently passable but the top of the seawall that was installed was not designed or constructed as a public access pathway and is therefore not ideal for walking, let alone accessible for cyclists.

Project – Develop trail on the back side of the seawall between Revere St and Seawall Ave.



FIGURE 8 SEAWALL LOOKING NORTH



SEAWALL LOOKING SOUTH

COTTAGE HILL

While the Edward Rowe Snow Path extends along Winthrop Beach toward Yirrell, there is a significant gap in the walkway between the southern end of Winthrop Beach and the north end of Yirrell Beach. The gap is located between the arrows in the figure below where the path currently comes to an abrupt end.

Project – Extend the walkway below Cottage Hill to the stairway accessing existing path on the north end of Yirrell Beach. .



FIGURE 9 COTTAGE HILL BEACH GAP

YIRRELL BEACH

A seawall runs the length of Yirrell Beach. No path with a solid footing path exists along the beach except at the north end of the beach on the west side of seawall.

Project – Construct a boardwalk along the length of Yirrell Beach adjacent to the existing Seawall.



FIGURE 10 YIRRELL BEACH

HARBOR ROUTE

The Harbor Route consists primarily of low traffic residential streets. Cyclists may share the roadway and pedestrians on the sidewalks. The primary gap in this route is along Lewis Lake just south of the Golf Course.

LEWIS LAKE

Lewis Lake is a valuable public open space asset for the town. The lake is currently surrounded by mowed grass and is, therefore, passable by walkers. However, a formalized trail along the lake would provide a stable surface and continuity between the existing path and the proposed HarborWalk on Shirley St. Recent funding secured from the Seaport Advisory Council will allow the town to begin the design, engineering, and permitting necessary for this section of the HarborWalk to be addressed.

Project – Construct a path on the east side of the lake between the existing path on the north side and Washington Ave.



FIGURE 11 LEWIS LAKE

TOWN CENTER ROUTE

This route connects the center of town at French Square with many of the large open spaces in town including Ingleside Park, the cemetery, and golf course. The single gap in this route is to run a path through the edge of the golf course property.

GOLF COURSE

There is the potential for an off road trail from Madison Ave through the cemetery on existing paths and through the golf course property to Lewis Lake. There is an existing trail between River Rd and Veterans Rd. To bridge this gap, it is recommended that a trail be built along the edge of the golf course property as indicated by the yellow line in the figure below.

The term of the golf course lease expires in 2013, so this would be the prime opportunity to secure an easement for the trail.



FIGURE 12 TRAIL POTENTIAL NEAR THE GOLF COURSE

ACTION STEPS

1. Scope in greater detail each of the gap segments as described above
2. Identify opportunities for each of the gaps to implement, specifically adjacent road construction projects, permitting updates (golf course) and funding opportunities through mitigation, donation and other funding sources.

GREENWAY BRANDING

Key to establishing a greenway system is creating branding and signage for the routes. However branding will only be successful when it reaches the general public through print and internet media, maps, signboards, pavement markings, and other visible elements.

The key components of branding of a trail system include the following

LOGO

A logo and/or unifying name should be created for both the entire system and the individual trail. The logo should be simple yet effective in communicating that this is a theme, a connection, an amenity.



FIGURE 13 BAY CIRCUIT TRAIL LOGO

WAYFINDING

Wayfinding provides easy to follow point by point directions that a user of the trail can follow from one end to the other. Wayfinding starts with a map of the route. The map shall be digital, available online through the town website, and posted at key points along the route.

Wayfinding on the ground is typically any combination of pavement markings or signs that provide continuity and ability to follow the trail independently. Examples include the Freedom Trail marked with a red stripe on the sidewalk and the Route Verte (Green Route) bikeway system in Quebec marked with the logo and directional arrows at every turn.



FIGURE 14 FREEDOM TRAIL SIDEWALK MARKING



ROUTE VERTE WAYFINDING SIGNS

Kiosks and Signboards

Perhaps the most effective way to promote the greenway locally is to place signboards with maps and information strategically in several high visibility points along the routes. This includes all locations identified for bike share stations and along the entry points to the Town. For example, the Wellesley Trail system has a number of signboards throughout the town at trail entrances with a large map for viewing plus maps available to take.

FIGURE 15 WELLESLEY TRAILS SIGNBOARD



Tourism

The quality of the proposed greenway system with its expansive ocean views is unique to the Boston region and worthy of promoting in the tourist outlets in the Boston region. Tourism is a means of economic development and therefore increased resources to expand and improve upon the greenway system.

It is recommended to advertise the greenway through visitor bureaus, state and local, pamphlets in key locations, and a robust internet presence.

ACTION STEPS

1. Establish a process to brand the greenway system, be it by committee, or other collaborative process.
2. Develop a logo or other unifying theme.
3. Develop materials for public use including maps (online and print), brochures, kiosks. The maps shall show system status (identify sections that are not yet complete). Consider adding historical, cultural, recreation, and transportation information to the kiosks.
4. Develop and implement wayfinding. Wayfinding can be any combination of signs, pavement markings, directional arrows, and descriptive information (such as x miles to a destination)



Walk Winthrop

Existing trail/path	
Future trail/path	
On road/sidewalk	
Regional Greenway (proposed)	
Future bike share station	

MAPC Trailmap

	Proposed	Existing
Shared-use paths		
Improved path		
Unimproved path		
Bicycle facilities (on-road)		
Cycle track		
Bike lane		
Shared lane		
On-road route		
Walking facilities		
Walking path or trail		

	Train station
	Commuter Rail / Subway
	Ferry route
	Town hall
	Municipal boundary
	Water bodies
	Open Space

0.5 Miles

Source:
MAPC & MAPC Municipalities,
MassGIS, MassDOT, OpenStreetMap.

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