

*Edmund G. Hamann
106 Holworthy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138*

March 14, 1998

Mr. Rick Corsi
Planning Office
Metropolitan District Commission
20 Somerset Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Mr. Corsi:

Although I have been unable to attend meetings on the Charles River Master Plan thus far, I have been hearing some of the ideas expressed by members of the bicycle advocacy community, including the Cambridge Bicycle Committee and the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition.

It particularly concerns me that sufficient thought has not been given to the esplanade along the Charles River on the Cambridge side separating MIT from the river. I use the term "esplanade" because that is what in effect existed on the left bank of the river before the automobile age prompted the construction of Memorial Drive. As we all know, this section of the roadway contains an approximately eighty foot wide median separating four shoulderless traffic lanes. This layout severely limits the tremendous recreational and scenic value of an incomparable urban river front on the Cambridge side as well as other transportation modes like bicycling and walking. The median is a wasted facility, because no one wants to feel stranded in the midst of a very busy arterial roadway. The median serves no functional role other than to separate opposing lanes of traffic, nor has it the aesthetic appeal of an urban mall like Commonwealth Avenue.

It is quite apparent to me as I am sure it is to many other concerned citizens that the Master Plan should envision at least a partial restoration of left bank esplanade. The plan should call for the relocation of the east-bound lanes of Memorial Drive alongside the west-bound, allowing for an adequate safety median and shoulders. This would restore approximately sixty feet of the river bank to parkland, enormously enhancing it as a recreational area and allowing for separate bicycle and pedestrian facilities as well as quiet contemplative spaces. And, at the same time, it would be automobile traffic neutral.

Inclusion of a restored left bank esplanade in the Master Plan eminently justifies the prominent role of the MDC as the Commonwealth's principal agency for the construction and maintenance of the parklands of greater Boston. It would be a tragedy if it does not take this opportunity to create what would be a tremendous asset for generations to come.

Yours sincerely,

Member, Cambridge Bicycle Committee
Board of Directors, Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition

Copies:

Senate President Thomas Birmingham
Senator Robert A. Havern, Chair, Joint Committee on Transportation
Senator Warren Tolman
Representative Anne M. Paulsen
Representative Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.
Representative Alice Wolf
Francis H. Duehay, Mayor, City of Cambridge
Susan Schlesinger, Assistant City Manager for Community Development
John Crisley, President, Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition

Comm. & Rpts. from City Officers

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Communication was received *S 194*
from Edmund G. Hamann, transmitting
his reactions to the Open Forum
Article in the February 12, 1998
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In City Council March 23, 1998

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