

CITY OF BOSTON BOYLSTON ST (JP): REVIEW OF CONCERNS AND PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES

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Traffic-calmed local streets

Separated bike lanes are our preferred bike facility for many streets in Boston. Once a route has been identified as potentially useful for the bike network, we consider the right type of bike facility for that street or set of streets. We most often look at:

- Overall traffic volume,
- Speed limit or prevailing speeds, and
- Curbside conflicts, such as commercial loading, bus stops, and pick-up/drop-off zones

Separated bike lanes are often unnecessary on streets with moderate volumes and where drivers are held to a lower posted speed limit of 20 m.p.h. This includes most of our typical residential streets, where the available curb width is 26' or under. Here, we will often use speed humps and shared lane markings (also known as “sharrows”). This approach to building a bike network is a [national practice](#) often known as “bicycle boulevards” or “neighborhood greenways”.

Sharrows have been proven to have little benefit for safety by themselves, and we have stopped adding sharrows to streets that do not have speed humps. With sufficiently slow driving speeds, however, shared lane markings are appropriate and helpful to indicate a street where bikes and cars can be expected to safely share space.

Contraflow bike lanes

While contraflow bike lanes are a relatively new tool in Boston, they have been proven successful for decades in Cambridge, Brookline, and other cities in the US and internationally.

The National Association of City Transportation Officials, or NACTO, shares the most up-to-date best practice guidance on safe street design strategies, and their guidelines are widely endorsed at the local, state, and Federal levels. [NACTO's guidance](#) indicates that contraflow bike lanes are appropriate on streets where: two-way connections between bicycle facilities are needed along one-way streets; speeds and volumes are low; large

numbers of bicyclists are already riding the wrong way; and alternative routes include unsafe or uncomfortable streets with high traffic volumes and/or no bike facilities. This guidance is consistent with that from the Federal Highway Administration.

Who we're designing for

As an administration, we have put a focus on improving the lives and well-being of our children and we want to enable more people of many ages to feel comfortable and safe navigating our streets on a bike. That said, our target design audience for bike projects is not necessarily a young child on their own, but an adult or teenager. For this group, we are looking to provide easy crossings of major streets, dedicated space on high-volume streets and slow streets where space is shared, and a clear, simple-to-follow routing from key origins and destinations.

Alternative: Spring Park Avenue

Spring Park Avenue is a potential alternative to Boylston Street for eastbound travel. To connect people riding on South Huntington Avenue to this route, we would need to add a separated bike lane on Centre Street. Separated bike lanes are the appropriate facility for Centre Street due to its higher volumes of vehicle traffic and pressure for curb access. This would require eliminating a significant amount of parking on Centre Street between South Huntington Avenue and Spring Park Avenue, including directly in front of the Curley School where the curb access is important for arrival and dismissal.

Spring Park Avenue itself would need extensive traffic calming. Converting it to a one-way eastbound would have significant effects on surrounding streets, potentially increasing the volume of westbound traffic on Boylston.

There would be several options for connecting bikes at Spring Park Avenue and Chestnut Street to the Southwest Corridor. Reversing the direction of Hubbard Street could provide a nearly direct link, however it is likely to induce significant additional vehicular traffic on Hubbard Street and other neighborhood streets by creating a new, convenient vehicular link. It would also require changes in the Southwest Corridor park in order to provide a connection to the path. Routing bikes from Spring Park Avenue onto Chestnut Street and then a short stretch of Boylston Street (w/ a contraflow lane) is also an option, though it

increases the travel distance between South Huntington Avenue and Lamartine Street by 50% compared to the Boylston Street route.

All of these options would require people on a bike to traverse additional intersections, including unsignalized crossings of Centre Street and Lamartine Street.

Alternative: Paul Gore Street

Paul Gore Street is a potential alternative to Boylston Street as it is the closest parallel street and runs all the way to Lamartine Street. With additional speed humps and the removal of one side of parking between Chestnut Street and Lamartine Streets, it could provide an acceptable level of comfort with bikes sharing the narrow travel lane with cars. Unlike Boylston Street, however, the presence of parking on both sides of Paul Gore Street would not allow passing flexibility.

Paul Gore Street does not, however, provide for a safe or legible connection from South Huntington Avenue. For eastbound bikes to continue onto Paul Gore Street, they would need to cross South Huntington Avenue and Centre Street, both high volume arterials, at unsignalized intersections. Creating a safe, signalized midblock crossing at South Huntington at Barbara Street would require parking restrictions and would likely add significant traffic delay that would impact the high-frequency #39 bus. The other changes necessary to make this maneuver safer would likely result in additional parking loss along Centre and Barbara Streets. Additionally, a connection to the Southwest Corridor path would require constructed changes to the curb and for DCR to make modifications to the park.