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massachusetts

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summer 2023

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As a Springfield resident I am THRILLED that WalkBoston is now officially WalkMassachusetts. It makes so much sense — the organization has been helping communities such as Springfield become more walkable for over a decade! Just last month WalkMassachusetts led 18 residents, including our Health Department Commissioner, on a fifteenth walk audit in my city.

I encourage all to join our statewide community by adding the monthly WalkMassachusetts Network session into your calendars. This one-hour Zoom meeting, the third Wednesday of each month at 1pm is now an organization fixture. In the past few months, participants from across Massachusetts provided feedback on snow clearance, discussed a preview of our 2022 report on fatal pedestrian crashes in the state, learned about the Boston Disability Commission's "Boston Brakes" campaign, and discovered firsthand who else across the Commonwealth is working on pedestrian safety.

I'm already preparing for Beat the Bay State — our annual team-based fitness challenge and signature fundraising event. This year my team WILL walk the full 900 miles during November. Join me in recruiting a team now!

I also want to welcome seven new board members. These new members add the experience, skills, and diversity needed for us to really move forward the implementation of our equity based Strategic Plan. Read more about it below.

Finally, a special thanks to our staff, Brendan, Althea, Iolando, and Ava, who have each taken on extra tasks with the departure of Stacey Beuttell and Wendy Landman. **Show your appreciation with a donation to WalkMassachusetts today.**

Thank you for your support,

Betsy Johnson, Board President

BY ALICE BROWN / BOSTON HARBOR NOW, CHIEF OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

A "people first" approach at the Annual Celebration

"People before Highways: Boston Activists, Urban Planners, and a New Movement for City Making" is Dr. Karilyn Crockett's 2018 book about the people whose protests and coalition-building brought the construction of the Southwest Expressway and the Inner Belt to a halt. The pages are full of stories gathered from archives and interviews that highlight seemingly ordinary people who created an extraordinary force for changing government policy and infrastructure spending.

Dr. Crockett, the keynote speaker at WalkMassachusetts' Annual Celebration, has put people first not only in her book title but in her professional work in academia, at the City of Boston, and in her previous non-profit work. Much of her work focuses on gathering and sharing the stories of people who have been marginalized or silenced or forgotten in order to highlight their contributions to building a better Boston, a better city, a better future.

She spoke in early April to folks who filled the room for the Annual Celebration and who she described as the "yes people, the go people, the get it done people." She began with poetry by the late Boston activist Mel King from his book "Streets." Her remarks from there unfolded like a poem as she described the invisible

pressures conveyed by physical maps of what could have been — the radiating highway network pushing Boston from an industrial city to a service-based economy, shifting toward fossil fuel dependency, and increasing racial segregation. The victory of stopping the highway construction was also, she noted, a victory "for a much more inclusive and expansive future, an alternative future, which is where we stand now...and for grassroots organizing and visioning"

There are still traces of the fight to stop the highway half a century ago that can be found on the detailed historic plaque at Roxbury Crossing, the Wake Up the Earth Festival that celebrates the victory, and the present day experience of traveling along the linear park that forms the Southwest Corridor. Yet, Dr. Crockett reminded us that we still have more victories to claim. In particular, the recent WalkMassachusetts crash report demonstrates the need for continued activism, fighting, and visioning. The ongoing climate emergency, also linked to the dependence on highways and automobility, demands action now. Her remarks insisted that we should use our neighbors and our networks to "create new kinds of policies and spatial realities," to put people first, and to co-create a new future. *continued*

BY ALTHEA WONG-ACHORN / WALKMASSACHUSETTS DEPUTY DIRECTOR/DEVELOPMENT

One year later, lessons from our strategic plan

A year ago you heard from us about our Vision for the future: a Massachusetts where people walking—no matter their race, identity, age, ability, or lived experience—feel safe, connected, and valued on our streets and sidewalks. To make this a reality we created a new strategic plan and a strategy screen for determining how and where to focus our work. To make sure that we are working in places with the greatest need and where we can have a lasting effect.

As a small staff it is vital that we look closely at every potential project to make sure that we use our resources well and maximize our impact. To that end we are increasingly working on projects and tools that can be replicated in other areas and where we can increase the capacity of local community members and organizations. We want to make sure that the work continues, even when we're no longer actively working in a community.

See full strategic plan: walkboston.org/mission

Calendar

For info on the below:
walkboston.org/events

Seaport Walk
Wed. July 12 @ 5:30pm

Our Statewide Network
Monthly Zoom Meetings
The WalkMassachusetts Network meets monthly on the third Wednesday @ 1pm. Share your local challenges, fights, ideas and solutions. We often have guest speakers presenting on a range of topics. All are welcome to join.
Next meetings:
• July 19 @ 1pm
• August 16 @ 1pm

Franklin Park Walk
Tues. September 19 @ 5:30pm

The crash report demands a high level of activism

For the second year in a row, WalkMassachusetts has released a report that examined fatal pedestrian crashes across the state from the prior year. “Fatal Pedestrian Crashes in MA (2022)” shows that fatal crashes are up by 35% in 2022 compared to 2021.

Our report showed that there were 439 fatal traffic crashes in 2022. After a dip during the first year of the pandemic in 2020, fatal pedestrian crashes in MA returned in 2021 to a level similar to what we’ve seen every year since 2015; this number was over 30% higher in 2022. At least 101 pedestrians lost their lives, accounting for over 23% of the total. This report examined initial crash information made available by MassDOT through the agency’s Interactive Mapping Portal for Analysis and Crash Tracking (IMPACT) portal.

Of the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts, 60 had a fatal pedestrian crash in 2022. There were 19 municipalities with multiple fatal crashes, while 10 Gateway Cities had more than one fatal crash. Similar to the concerning trend in 2021, older adults were hit and


killed at a higher rate than other age groups: 38.6% of fatal crash victims were over the age of 65, a segment that only represents 17% of the Commonwealth’s population. 71% of fatal pedestrian crashes took place in Environmental Justice (EJ) Census Block Groups. Environmental Justice Population Data is based upon income, race, and English language proficiency criteria developed by the state’s Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). The preponderance of crashes in EJ communities demands action to address the effects of years of historic disinvestment and redlining.

Our state and local leaders can and must take steps to design our streets to be safer for our citizens. We believe that MassDOT should hasten efforts to release an Action Plan based on the Strategic Highway Safety Plan. It is crucial to identify how the safety plan will be implemented. This includes identifying any resources and additional staff that will be required so that the Legislature can appropriately fund the program.

Full report is available at walkboston.org/fatal22

SUMMER 2023

MISSION
WalkMassachusetts makes walking safer and easier in Massachusetts to encourage better health, a cleaner environment and vibrant communities.
walkmass.org
Boston MA 02109
50 Milk Street—16th fl



thank you!

Become a supporter today! walkmassachusetts.org

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Old Colony Planning Council

A “people first” approach cont.

Reflecting on the Annual Celebration wouldn’t be complete without recognizing the incredible work of the Golden Shoe Award winners. This year’s awards reflected the “people first” work Dr. Crockett spoke of, and action toward creating a better Commonwealth for everyone:

- **Fred Salvucci**, a lifelong civil engineer, educator, transportation advocate, and coalition builder. From expanding Boston’s transit system to being a key developer of the Big Dig project, Fred’s tireless dedication to the wellbeing, connectivity, and prosperity of his beloved city continues to inspire us today.
- **Merrimack Valley Fare-Free Program & Bus Transformation**, a collaboration that resulted in a fare-free bus pilot that became permanent in the Merrimack Valley! From its tagline “Let’s go/iVamos!” to the buses’ cheerful new color scheme, MeVa’s visionary approach to public transit has tremendously increased ridership across the Valley.
- **MassTrails**, the inter-agency initiative of the Commonwealth led by the Governor’s Office in collaboration with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation, developed a unified vision for a trails network across the Commonwealth. This year \$11.8 million in MassTrails Grants was allocated to 81 projects in Massachusetts.