



walk

massachusetts

COMMUNITY | MOBILITY | ACCESS

BY EMMA ITRI / WALKMASSACHUSETTS DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Get Ready for November’s Beat the Bay State Challenge!

Beat the Bay State Challenge (BTBS) returns for the fifth year this November, offering a month-long virtual walking/running challenge for all abilities. This has turned into our biggest annual fundraiser, and your participation will make it even bigger and better this year!

Throughout November, teams and participants will strive to complete up to 900 miles, representing the perimeter of Massachusetts. The best part? You can walk or run inside or outside, in Massachusetts or anywhere else. All miles count! Whether you’re an avid runner or enjoy casual strolls, this challenge is for everyone. You can join as part of a team or go solo, and walk as much or little as you like. People can continue to sign up or join a team at any point until November 30th.

How It Works:

- BTBS kicks off Nov. 1st and goes through Nov 30th.
- Track your progress daily/weekly by logging miles online and reaching milestones along the way.

Why you’ll want to join:

- Move: Stay active and healthy while challenging yourself and others.
- Fun: Participate in a fun, team-based competition that fosters camaraderie.
- Make a difference: Your participation funds the work of WalkMassachusetts and its vital mission to create safer, more walkable communities across the state.

Sign up today: walkmass.org/baystate

BY BRENDAN KEARNEY / WALKMASSACHUSETTS CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

There’s no such thing as jaywalking

This piece is adapted from a 2022 [Boston Globe](#) article by Brendan Kearney.

The term ‘jaywalking’ was created by the auto industry in the 1920s to divert blame from drivers who were hitting and killing people. A century later, it has proven to be a highly successful marketing effort. But did you know that there’s actually no such thing as ‘jaywalking’ under Massachusetts law? You’re legally allowed to cross the street even if there is not a crosswalk present. There are just a few additional things you need to know in order to have the law behind you.

To begin, this information is not fully explained in Massachusetts General Law (MGL); instead, details on where and how you can legally cross the street is found in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR), which have the force and effect of law-like statutes. CMRs are created and enforced by executive branch agencies, which are given the rulemaking authority by the state legislature.

According to [700 CMR 9.09: Pedestrian Regulations](#), “Pedestrians shall obey the directions of police officers directing traffic and whenever there is an officer directing traffic, a traffic control signal or a marked

crosswalk within 300 feet of a pedestrian, no such pedestrian shall cross a way or roadway except within the limits of a marked crosswalk and as hereinafter provided in 700 CMR 9.00.” Reading a little further, we get this additional guidance: “Crossing at Non-Signalized Locations. Every pedestrian crossing a roadway in an urban area at any point other than within a marked crosswalk shall yield the right of way to all vehicles upon the roadway”

So as long as you’re more than 300 feet from a signalized intersection or a marked crosswalk, and you yield to people driving, you’re legally allowed to cross the street. If you’re crossing the street at a marked crosswalk, people driving are required to yield to you. This regulation reflects how we all use our streets and how our communities are designed.

For example, I live on Central Street in Framingham. There is a sidewalk on one side of the street, opposite my house. I cross to that sidewalk when there are no drivers coming, or when someone yields. No crosswalk exists. It is unsafe to walk on the narrow 30-mile-per-hour street with traffic at my back to the crosswalk a quarter-of-a-mile away — and illegal. When [continued](#)

BY JONATHAN GOMEZ-PEREIRA / WALKMASSACHUSETTS PROGRAM MANAGER

Centering Inclusion: East Boston Walk/Caminata Comunitaria

In August, WalkMassachusetts staff collaborated on a Community Advocacy Walk with GreenRoots, an Environmental Justice non-profit based in Chelsea, to highlight East Boston community voices and program work. It was our first Spanish-led event; interpretation for English language participants was provided. Thanks to our bilingual Spanish-speaking staff, WalkMassachusetts is expanding our reach using a Language Justice framework. Historically, transportation planning processes and outreach have been conducted only in English, excluding populations without English proficiency. By centering inclusion, we can create events and spaces where non-English speakers can fully participate in meaningful ways, and share their knowledge and experiences for the benefit of all.

In September, we invited folks to join Caminatas Verdes (“Green Walks”), a weekly walking group of East Boston residents who gather to be physically active together and create community. Before the walk, participants

met at the Bremen Street Park amphitheater to preview topics that would be covered during the walk. Noemy Rodriguez, a 2024 WalkMassachusetts Golden Shoe Recipient, shared the history of the Caminatas Verdes, highlighting how it incorporates the rich diversity of the area and the various cultures, languages, nationalities, ages and abilities. Attendees then heard from Sandra Nijjar, Founder and Executive Director of the East Boston Community Soup Kitchen, about food access and providing families with nutritious food. Afterwards, Beatriz Yañez, a Caminatas Verdes participant for over 8 years, shared her experiences as part of the group and how it provided a supportive community as she recovered from COVID-19 complications. Her remarks spoke to the power of moving together and being part of such a group.

Along the Mary Ellen Welch Greenway route, which connects the Jeffries Point neighborhood to Orient Heights, attendees learned about housing justice from Rina, a long-time neighborhood resident. She [continued](#)

fall 2024

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Calendar

Nov 1–30

Beat the Bay State Challenge

See cover article. Join the fun!

Sign up: walkmass.org/baystate

Sun, Nov 17

World Day of Remembrance

An annual international event when people can gather together to reflect upon those we've lost or been injured in a traffic crash and commit ourselves to improving our state's roads. visionzerocoalition.org/wdr

Wed, Nov 20, 1 pm via Zoom

WalkMassachusetts Network

Topic: Walking City Trail (WCT)

Speaker: Miles Howard

Founder and lead organizer of the 27-mile walking route through 30+ urban green spaces in 17 Boston neighborhoods; from Mattapan's

Harvest River Bridge to Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown. A transit-accessible curation of pre-existing spaces, scouted, connected, and mapped by volunteers, the Walking City Trail was launched in 2022 and has since been walked by thousands of Boston residents and visitors. Maps, directions, and a short history of the trail can be found on the Walking City Trail's dedicated website at bostontrails.org.

Register:

walkmass.org/walkMANetwork

Wed, Dec 18, 1 pm via Zoom

WalkMassachusetts Network

Topic/Speaker: TBA

Register:

walkmass.org/walkMANetwork

Jaywalking cont.

there is a sidewalk on either side of the street, I'm supposed to walk on it; if there isn't one, the law says to walk against traffic.

Efforts to crack down on 'jaywalking' place an unnecessary burden on pedestrians without making anyone safer. There are also significant equity concerns around jaywalking enforcement. Jaywalking laws contribute to racial profiling. A [report by ProPublica and Florida-Times Union](#) found that Black people in Jacksonville, Florida were three times as likely to be stopped and cited as White people. Similar patterns have been seen elsewhere; [Streetsblog NYC reported](#) that nearly 90 percent of people issued jaywalk citations in New York City in 2019 were Black and Brown. In response, efforts to decriminalize jaywalking have been mounted in a number of places, including Virginia and California.

If decriminalization is the next step, it must be done along with the development of safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure throughout the Commonwealth. Instead of focusing on punishing pedestrians, we should prioritize creating safer streets for everyone. This includes building more sidewalks, improving crosswalk visibility, and reducing vehicle speeds in residential areas. By investing in infrastructure and promoting pedestrian safety, we can create a more equitable and livable environment for all, regardless of race or socioeconomic status.



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walkmass.org

mission

WalkMassachusetts makes walking safer and easier in Massachusetts to encourage better health, a cleaner environment, and more vibrant communities.

FALL 2024

Beat the Bay State Challenge: NOV 1—30TH
SIGN UP: walkmass.org/baystate

thank you!

Become a supporter today! walkmass.org

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Centering Inclusion cont.

shared memories of what the East Boston coastline once was, and noted the challenges that have resulted from rapid development. She highlighted the exponential growth of housing costs in the once affordable neighborhood and the resulting displacement that Caminatas Verdes participants organize around.

John Walkey, GreenRoots Director of Climate Justice & Waterfront Initiatives, provided context on their East Boston programs. He highlighted the evolution of Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 91, which has resulted in new developments along Boston Harbor being required to provide amenities such as public restrooms and meeting spaces to host communities. John noted that green spaces such as Piers Park are essential to counter the negative air quality impacts the abutting airport has on the community.

The Community Advocacy Walk highlighted the challenges faced by East Boston residents, examining development, mobility and pedestrian safety issues from a holistic perspective. These types of partnerships help residents who may have been left out of the decision making process in the past feel confident about collaborating with city staff to shape transportation and development projects to benefit current and future residents and reduce potential harms.

See the [Spanish version online](#).