

Preserve the Commonwealth's Historic Parkway

A coalition of parkway advocates are concerned that a "Special Commission" established by the legislature could recommend the transfer DCR's Historic Parkway to MassDOT destroying the important value they provide connecting urban parks and greenways throughout the Commonwealth. The DCR Parkway are an integral part of the Commonwealth's park system and although they are in many cases important for transportation, the Historic Parkway are fundamentally different from the highways managed by the MassDOT. **The differences are clear, standing at the intersection below, you look to the right, you see VFW Highway and to the left you see VFW Parkway.**



VFW Parkway versus VFW Highway

The Charge of the Special Commission

The legislature established a DCR Special Commission to look at improving the management, operations, and asset conditions at the DCR. Language establishing the Commission was introduced in an outside section of the FY20 budget. Due to COVID, the commissioners were only appointed recently and held their first meeting in March. One of the charges of the Commission is to make: "a determination of whether departments, divisions, assets or operations of the department should be transferred to other agencies, departments, municipalities or entities, with special consideration given to urban parks and roadways"

Commission Shortcomings

The legislation and charge of the Commission lacks specifics, leaving important decisions to the contractor (UMass Donahue Institute) to decide:

- Transfer of assets, which include DCR's historic parkways have been examined and debated many times over the last twenty years. More emphasis should be taken into account on these past attempts to transfer assets.
- Proper staffing of the agency and appropriate capital & operating budget for DCR should be one of the most important parts of the analysis. Over 50 vacant engineering positions remain unfilled since 2015. The cumulative underfunding of the agency has made it impossible to maintain the critical public infrastructure across the state.
- It is unclear how much public comment will be accepted by the Commission.
- It does not appear that all the appropriate stakeholders have been notified and interviewed by the Commission.
- The time frame is too short to allow for a comprehensive review.

Why Historic Parkway Matter

A focus on Parkway is a focus on parks. Historic Parkway connect people to parks and protect the natural setting they are a part of. Fredrick Law Olmsted and Charles Eliot both advocated for the establishment of border roads or parkways that would link and help protect parks. In 1878 Olmsted designed the Emerald Necklace connecting the Charles River to Franklin Park which now links the Back Bay Fens, Riverway, Olmsted Park Jamaica Pond and the Arnold Arboretum. Today, the network of parkways, bike trails, river walks, rail trails, river parks, conservation trails and greenways have evolved into interconnected greenspaces for the public to enjoy. The parkways provide an important link that allows the emerald network to grow throughout the Commonwealth.

What you can do to help

- Make your voice heard ! Contact members of the Commission and elected officials today. Insist on a full public discussion before any recommendations are made by the Commission. Advocate for adequate funding and sufficient staffing at DCR. Oppose the transfer of DCR's Historic Parkway to MassDOT.
- Attend the virtual meetings of the Special Commission, dates and times are listed at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/department-of-conservation-and-recreation-special-commission-meetings>
- Submit testimony at the Special Commission's Public listening sessions on May 25th 4-6pm
- Join the Parkway Coalition by contacting Steve Smalley at MOSES. ssmalley@moses-ma.org

