

Infrastructure and Ecological Inventory
of the
Neponset River Riverwalk
in Quincy, Massachusetts



Submitted to

Mayor William Phelan's Riverwalk Task Force

by

Jeffrey Collins
Director, Ecological Extension Service

10 May 2007

Introduction

The goal of this study is to inventory the location and condition of existing trails on Squantum Point and identify opportunities and constraints relative to linking those existing trails and walkways into a coherent system as part of the envisioned Neponset River Riverwalk. Mass Audubon's Ecological Extension Service assists conservation partners such as towns and land trusts with inventory and land management as part of our mission to protect the nature of Massachusetts.

I visited the study area on 8 February, 12 March, and 28 March 2007, exploring all sections of the study area by foot. I carried a Garmin GPS III+ to collect data on trail location, and created gps waypoints for locations of photographs and features of interest. I recorded field observations on each path section and potential connections, and photographed each section. The track and waypoint data were transferred to maps using aerial photography and other data from MassGIS in ArcView 9.2.

The entire study area and all trail sections are illustrated in Figure 1. Major trail sections mapped and presented below were identified in consultation with members of Mayor William Phelan's Riverwalk Task Force. The sections as currently defined are convenient for breaking the trail network into units for more detailed analysis. They do not necessarily reflect common ownership, condition, or management need.



Figure 1. The study area and major trail sections.

Trail Inventory

Section 1

This southern-most stretch of the potential trail route runs alongside the Neponset River from the Adams Inn, underneath the Neponset Bridge and the MBTA Red Line bridges, to Commander O’Shea Boulevard. The route currently includes sections of paved and gravel trail on the Adams Inn property, features existing and potential public canoe/kayak access, and affords excellent views of the river. Current construction work at 2 Hancock Street (the lot between the bridges) presents the opportunity to complete a connection between Section 1-1 and Commander O’Shea Boulevard. The Order of Conditions for the work at 2 Hancock includes new trails from the Adams Inn north. An existing wooden pier along Section 1-4 presents the opportunity to create public access for canoe and kayak users. Sections 1-4 and 1-6 would be prime candidates for installation of lighting and benches to invite users onto this attractive stretch of the riverfront.



Figure 2 – Squantum Point Trail: Section 1

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
1-1	475	gravel/paved	5-6	Very good	fair

A well-built and well-maintained section of trail leading from the Adams Inn parking lot to their riverside gazebo and dock, then roughly 300' to the north to another section of parking lot. The southernmost section, from a parking area to the gazebo and dock, is surfaced with peastone gravel. The 5-6' wide trail running north from the gazebo is surfaced with stone dust. The path is sandwiched between the river and a 3-story section of the Adams Inn, not too far from the rooms which look out onto the river through full-length glass windows. The path reaches a concrete sidewalk at the northern end which leads back to a section of the Adams Inn parking lot. The gravel section rates poorly for accessibility, and the stone dust section only moderately better. The short concrete section is excellent for accessibility.

The gazebo presents a very pleasant destination with excellent views of the river and of protected land on the Boston side of the river. Parking is plentiful at the north and south ends of this section, although details of advertised parking would need to be negotiated with the Adams Inn. Directly beside the gazebo is a dock owned by the Adam's Inn, consisting of a permanent on-shore structure and a seasonal floating dock. At the time of our visit, the floating dock portion was hauled up on the river bank. This would be an excellent location for a public canoe/kayak launch.

Signs indicate that this entire section of path is open to the public. The attractive signs, found at either end of the path, read, "We at the Best Western Adams Inn invite you to enjoy the Neponset River and its banks. Our improvements under license #6834 have made access much easier. As a hotel our grounds are open 24 hours a day. However, we ask that you consider our guests and your safety. Please be careful."



Path from Adams Inn parking lot leading to dock and gazebo. Note public access sign.



View south alongside Adams Inn towards gazebo.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
1-2	225	grass	3-4	poor	poor

A low grassy berm that running along the Adams Inn parking lot. There is no path in place, although walking along the berm is rather easy. This section would need to be re-graded and surfaced to accommodate a walking path. Unclear whether agreement granting public access to waterfront on Adams Inn property covers this stretch as well.



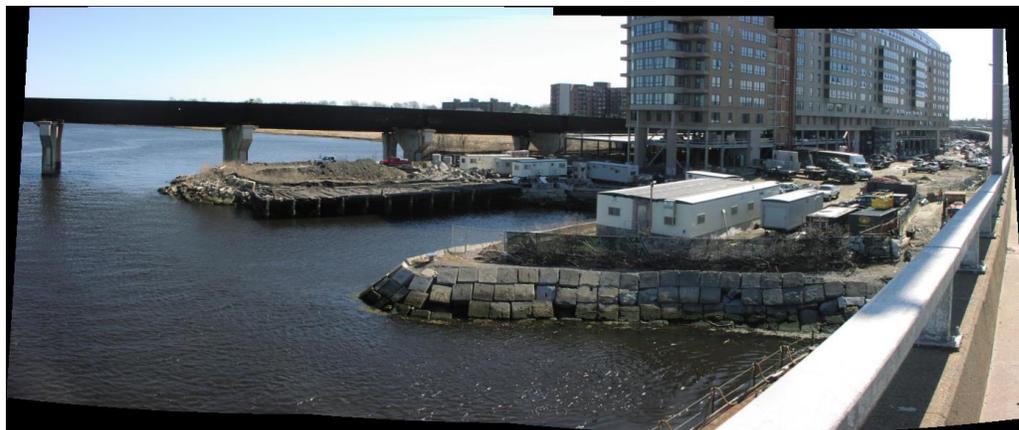
View north from north end of Section 1-1 to Section 1-2. Neponset Bridge in background.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
1-3	130	dirt	N/A	poor	poor

A short stretch of the proposed trail route that runs underneath the Neponset Bridge. The dirt ground is currently rutted by construction vehicles. The bridge is very high here, and this section could very easily accommodate a safe, attractive section of trail. Stairs leading from Neponset bridge imply public access to this area, but precise route of path would involve discussion with City Highway Department and others.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
1-4	650	N/A	N/A	N/A	poor

No trail currently in place. Site is undergoing construction. The final layout of this section is heavily dependent on the final shape of parking and facilities associated with new construction on the site.



View to general vicinity of section 1-4 from Neponset Bridge.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
1-5	110	dirt	N/A	poor	poor

Another short stretch of trail that would pass underneath a bridge, in this case the MBTA Red Line bridge. This section is currently less open and much less trafficked than the area underneath the road bridge, however with some litter removal and vegetation management, could be restored to a pleasant connection.



View to area underneath MBTA bridges.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
1-6	650	dirt	1-2	poor	poor

This section features perhaps the nicest views along the entire proposed route of a Squantum Point path. The observer, in one sweeping view, can take in the open river, narrow side channels, and a wide expanse of salt marsh, all with the Boston skyline in the distance. The site is currently little used. Access from Commander O’Shea Boulevard is via a narrow, muddy, informal track through long grasses and weedy plants. This section would need considerable improvement.



Overgrown path in section 1-6.



Panoramic view of Neponset River, side channels and salt marsh, north from section 1-6.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
1-7/8	100	N/A	N/A	N/A	poor

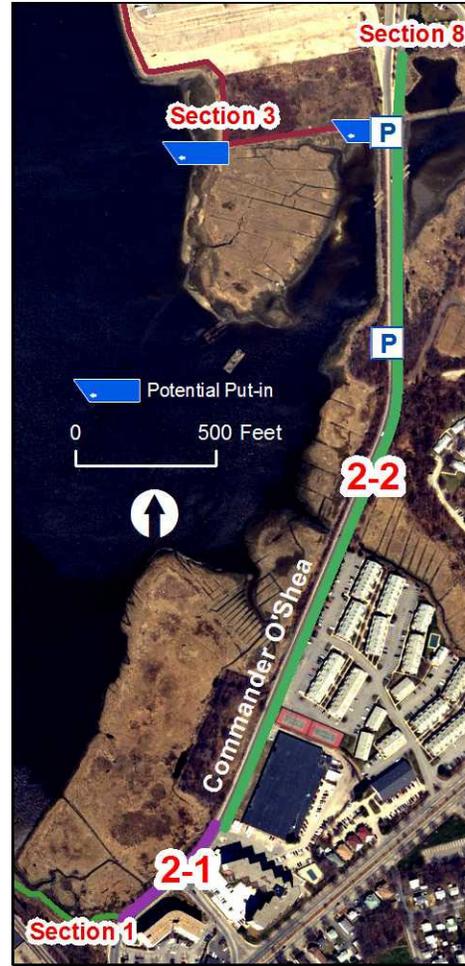
These two short spurs would connect the main section of the trail to existing staircases that climb to either side of the Neponset Bridge.

Section 2

A long, 0.6 mile stretch of sidewalk and road edge along Commander O’Shea Boulevard. Excellent views west onto the river. Connects to Section 1 at the south, Section 3 and Section 8 at the north end, and Section 5 midway along the length of 2-2. Entire section is open to the public.

Parking is available at two locations along section 2-2. The southern parking area, almost directly opposite the junction with Section 5, consists of five parking spots in a shallow pull-out aligned parallel to Commander O’Shea Boulevard. The northern parking area, at the intersection with Section 3, consists of eight parking spots, including a handicapped spot, aligned perpendicular to Commander O’Shea.

There are no crosswalks on Commander O’Shea and traffic moves at fairly high speeds. Crossing from the southerly pullout can be dangerous as cars approaching from the south are not visible beyond the curve just south of the pullout. The intersection with trail Section 5 is the safest place to cross as there is good visibility along Commander O’Shea Boulevard in both directions.



Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
2-1	475	dirt/gravel	2-4	poor	poor

2-1 – There is no formal pathway along this stretch of Commander O’Shea Blvd. A narrow gravel informal path running directly adjacent to the roadbed on the west side is lined with large boulders which make passing difficult. The east side is similar, with a 4 foot wide informal path atop the curb running adjacent to the road, but without a formal sidewalk. Decent visibility in both directions on Commander O’Shea Blvd. make this a potential crosswalk location.



View north along Commander O’Shea Blvd. from Section 1. Note boulders on left of road.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
2-2	2,900	paved	5-6 feet	Very good	Very good

A five foot wide, nicely paved sidewalk along the east side of Commander O’Shea Blvd. An informal gravel path runs along the west side of Commander O’Shea Blvd., separated from the road by a guardrail. This informal path creates a connection from Section 2-1 to section 3-1 without crossing Commander O’Shea Blvd., and it provides slightly better views to the Neponset River to the west, but is not as well surfaced.



View south along Commander O’Shea from junction with Section 5.



View north from intersection with Section 5. Note parking pull-out on left of road.



View south along Commander O’Shea from junction with Section 8.



View south along Commander O’Shea from parking pull-out at junction with Section 3.



Parking at north end of Section 2-2 off of Commander O’Shea Blvd. Section 3-1 begins at right.

Section 3

The main trail through this section is approximately 1.25 miles long and includes a wide range of trail conditions, from the best on the entire proposed trail route to the worst. The trail runs across land owned by Boston Scientific and into Squantum Point Park, owned and managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. The entire length of this section is open to the public.

Parking is available at the south end of Section 3, with spaces for eight cars, including a handicapped spot, at a pull-out off of Commander O'Shea Boulevard. Parking is also available at the north end of Section 3, at Squantum Point Park, which has an open lot with 26 spots, including two designated for handicapped parking.



Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-1	1,000	Stone dust	5	Very good	Fair

A five foot wide stone dust path between the Boston Scientific perimeter fence and the rip rap Neponset River bank. The surface is rough in some areas where erosion has created small channels through the stone dust. This stretch of path provides excellent views onto the river; however, the wide open nature of this section also leaves visitors exposed to winds. The land directly inside the perimeter fence is characterized by scrubby vegetation at the southern end, and parking lots at the north.



Section 3-1 looking west from parking area beside Commander O'Shea.



A second area of erosion.



An area of trail erosion from run-off.



View north along the Boston Scientific perimeter fence.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-2	1,500	gravel	6	Very good	poor

Similar to 3-1, but with gravel surface rather than stone-dust. Gravel is looser underfoot and a little more difficult to walk on. The trail runs between the Boston Scientific perimeter chain link fence and the riprap bank of the Neponset River. The land inside the chain link fence is primarily parking and loading docks. This section provides additional dramatic views onto the river, but is also exposed to the wind. A significant amount of litter, in the form of river-borne and tidal flotsam, lies strewn amid the riprap.



View north along trail from Section 3-1.



Area of slight erosion along path.



View north to end of Section 3-2



View south from northern end of Section 3-2.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-3	1,600	dirt	4-15	poor	poor

A little-maintained, former path within the Squantum Point State Park property. This stretch follows the route of an access road for the old airfield, but is now largely grown in with 15-foot high shrubs on either side. An 8-foot wide open drainage channel at the southern end of this section could make access difficult during rainy periods. A wooden plank currently assists with crossing. The trail surface is primarily dirt and accumulated leaf litter, although some pavement from the former roadbed appears. Shrubby vegetation has grown in on both sides, narrowing path to 4' in some places. In other places, path is 15' wide.

Drainage is a major issue along this section, with large, deep puddles across the path in several locations, particularly at the north end where it connects to section 3-4. There is some informal maintenance by users, as evidenced by pruned branches along the path. May be entirely passable in dry season. A large (10') berm is found roughly half-way along this section of trail. It appears to be composed largely of discarded pavement and dirt. An informal trail winds over this berm, a short section of narrow, steep, dirt footpath.



Drainage channel at south of Section 3-3.



View north into southern end of Section 3-3.



Narrow stretch choked with vegetation.



Narrow trail over dirt berm.



More open stretch of Section 3-3.



Large puddle at northern end of Section 3-3.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-4	280	pavement	10	Excellent	Excellent

A stretch of paved path which is part of the larger path loop from the Squantum Point Park parking lot, along the former runway path, to the concrete viewpoint to the northwest. Trail is 10' wide, nicely surfaced, with low stonewalls for sitting. Interpretive signage along the larger path (Section 3-9) describes the aviation history of the site. The sitting area at Squantum Point is perhaps the most pleasant location on the entire trail network.



Paved path in Section 3-4 with low wall.



View north to UMass and downtown Boston from sitting and viewing area on Squantum Point.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-5	1,300	Sand/gravel	6-10	fair	Fair/Poor

This section runs from the nicely paved trail of Sections 3-4 and 3-9 along the waterfront and back to the parking areas. The trails holds some puddles in wet conditions, most of which are easy to walk around. Wet conditions also make the sandy surface quite soft, making access somewhat difficult for those unsteady on their feet. The trail may be similarly difficult in very dry conditions. The trail passes through shrubby vegetation at its southwest end, then runs along the water's edge affording fantastic views to the north.



View north along trail from Section 3-4.



View west from Section 3-6 with view to right.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-6	450	pavement	15	Excellent	Excellent

This wide paved trail winds along the water's edge to the north of the large Squantum Point Park parking lots. The trail leads directly to the large pier which stretches 300 feet out into the harbor and affords outstanding views across the water from northwest to northeast. There are a few benches along this stretch as well as trash barrels.



View east along Section 3-6.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-7	250	Stone dust	2-4	fair	Poor

This short section of stone dust trail leads from the east end of Section 3-6 to the connection with Section 4. The appearance of the trail is somewhere between an informal desire line, created by repeated use, and a semi-maintained alternative route to the waterfront. Some surface improvement would be advantageous.



Section 3-7 near junction with Section 4.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-8	230	pavement	10	Excellent	Excellent

A short section of paved trail leading from Section 3-6 directly back to the parking area.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-9	3,500	pavement	10	Excellent	Excellent

This wide loop of paved trail follows the layout of one of the major runways that formerly occupied the site. The main section of trail leads from the southwest corner of the large Squantum Point Park parking area directly to the Squantum Point sitting area and lookout. A second loop of equal width and excellent conditions runs parallel 150 feet to the south. Four cross trails connect these two main trails (one of which is designated Section 3-4). Low stone walls, which are excellent for sitting, and interpretive signage are found along the length of the trail.



View southeast along Section 3-9.

The trails surround a large area of grassland which provides good habitat for nesting sparrows and other birds. Birds associated with larger expanses of grassland, including uncommon species such as Northern harrier, were formerly residents of the grasslands on Squantum Point, but the succession of grasslands to shrublands surrounding the old runways has reduced habitat quality for these grassland specialists.



View northeast into vast Squantum Point Park parking lot from southeast end of Section 3-9. Lot seems to be usually closed.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
3-10	100	pavement	10	Excellent	Poor

This small section is called out for its inaccessibility due to stairs, however Section 3-9 provides an accessible and most direct route between parking and the view point at Squantum Point. This optional loop leads to a slightly raised point which affords views northeast along the grassland.



The view northeast from Section 3-10



Stairs in Section 3-10.

Section 4

The trail in Section 4 runs almost entirely on sidewalks and paved walkways. The only unpaved section is the boardwalk at Marina Bay. While the total length of all mapped section is 1.5 miles, the most direct route from Section 3 to Section 5 is just under one mile. This section includes pleasant views north into Boston Harbor from the marina and views into salt marsh and tidal flats from Victory Road. Parking is available at Squantum Point Park and at the marina.



Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
4-1	520	paved	4-6	Good	Fair

This stretch follows existing sidewalks to skirt one of the marina parking lots. The sidewalks are not in excellent condition, narrowing at some points to under 4'. The sidewalk connects to Section 3 with a pleasant entrance to Squantum Point Park, and connects to Section 4-2 through a short, pleasantly landscaped, paved walk.



Connection from Section 4-1 to Section 3.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
4-2	850	Boardwalk	15	Excellent	Good

A stretch of boardwalk running in front of commercial establishments along the Marina Bay basin. The boardwalk provides very nice views into the marina, with benches, trash cans, and opportunities to purchase food and refreshment.



View west along boardwalk.



View north along boardwalk.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
4-3	830	paved	5-20	Excellent	Very Good

A section of paved paths servicing the marina to the east of the boardwalk. Visitors to the boardwalk can continue along this section, past additional food vendors, to the docks of the second marina basin. A wide paved path runs along the top of the docks, providing excellent views north and northeast to the Boston Harbor and Harbor Islands. There are two or three hibachi-type grills for picnics, although these may be reserved for marina customers. A narrower, shaded path runs alongside the large parking area south of this dockside path. This section is directly adjacent to a large parking area (100+ cars).



Dockside path and view northeast.



Sidewalk south of dockside path.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
4-4	70	Paved	8	Excellent	Excellent

A short section of paved trail leading from the boardwalk to the sidewalk.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
4-5	40	Paved	8	Excellent	Excellent

A crosswalk from 4-4 to the sidewalk of Section 4-6.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
4-6	1,500	Concrete	6	Excellent	Very Good

A long section of new concrete sidewalk in excellent condition. The sidewalk is roughly six feet wide, with a curb, and set back from Marina Drive behind a line of very nice street trees. There are curb cuts at each driveway and access road, but no crosswalks. This is a very pleasant walk with attractive houses on the southwest side of the street.



View east along Marina Drive.



View northwest along Marina Drive.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
4-7	1,100	Paved	5	Very good	Excellent

This stretch of paved trail along the east side of Marina Drive connects directly to Section 4-6, but is routed away from roadside, winding through a maintained lawn area. Potential exists for attractive views into salt marsh and tidal flats to the East. The view are partially obscured by wetland edge vegetation.



Southeast end of Section 4-7.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
4-8	1,900	Concrete	6	Excellent	Very Good

This section, a long stretch of new sidewalk on Victory Road, very similar to Section 4-6, is included as an alternative to the 4-6/4-7 route. Existing crosswalks connect to sections at either end. The sidewalk passes a pleasant streetscape on the east side of Victory

Road, although it is not as scenic on the west side. Sections 4-6/4-7 may be preferable route given the opportunity for views.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
4-9	830	Paved	5	Good	Fair

An older section of sidewalk, in good condition, running along the north side of Victory Road. Potential views to north are currently obscured by vegetation. A parcel of conservation land to the north of Victory Road, near the intersection with East Squantum Street, would be a fine location for a park, with improved access and views into the salt marsh and tidal flats to the north. Several curb cuts exist for access to this lot.



View east along Victory Road



Sign indicating conservation parcel.

Section 5

This section features lengths of sidewalk along busy roads and a very quiet stretch of nicely paved 'bikepath'. Routing is complicated by the current construction at Squantum Gardens, and the unsightly conditions behind that location. Excellent views are available into the salt marsh that lies in the middle of Squantum Point. Section 5-7 and the eventual route of Section 5-4 are good candidates for lighting and benches.



Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
5-1	100	Paved	8	Excellent	Excellent

A crosswalk at the intersection of Victory Road and East Squantum Street.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
5-2	1,100	Paved	6	Very good	Very good

A stretch of paved sidewalk along the west side of East Squantum Street in very good condition. The roadbed and sidewalk are bermed up, affording excellent views into salt marsh both to the west and the east. Volunteer-maintained planting beds line the west side of the road, and benches and a trash can give a sense of a well-ordered path.



View north along East Squantum Street.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
5-3	900	Paved	25	Poor	Fair

An unsightly stretch of potholed and patched road leading to the city school bus depot and an auto body shop. Potential views north into salt marsh are currently obscured by vegetation. The road is used regularly by school buses and cars. There are no sidewalks.



View from East Squantum Street



View west along access road to auto body shop.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
5-4	-	-	-	-	-

This section currently exists in concept only. New construction has changed the area since the aerial photo was taken (2005). I did not explore this area in detail due to active

construction. On-going construction creates an opportunity to include paths that would connect sections 5-1 to 5-6. Could have excellent views into salt marsh.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
5-5	550	dirt	-	Poor	Poor

A little used ballfield holds potential to connect a Squantum Gardens trail with section 5-7. Field is currently used somewhat as parking area for construction vehicles.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
5-6	150	Paved	8	Very good	Very good

A short section of paved sidewalk leading from Quincy Shore Drive to Section 5-6.



Paved path leading to Section 5-7.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
5-7	1,750	Paved	12	Very good	Very good

A very nice paved path running alongside and providing excellent views into the salt marsh. The path appears to be little used presently, with a fair amount of litter and some graffiti found along its length. The path provides an excellent connection back to Commander O’Shea Boulevard and section 2-2.



Southeast entrance to Section 5-7.



Northwest along Section 5-7.



View into salt marsh from Section 5-7.



Entrance from Commander O'Shea Blvd.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
5-8	850	Paved	6	Very good	Very good

This is a continuation of the very nice sidewalk of section 5-2, running along the west side of East Squantum Street. The sidewalk leads south to the busy intersection with Quincy Shore Drive. The intersection has crosswalks in all directions, and pedestrian-activated crossing signals. The Dunkin Donuts parking lot at northwest corner of this intersection does not include crosswalks and requires care to cross safely.



View south along East Squantum Street.



Panorama of Quincy Shore Drive/East Squantum Street intersection. Dunkin Donuts lot at left.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
5-9	630	Paved	4	Fair	Poor

A section of sidewalk running along the north side of Quincy Shore Drive. Sidewalk is older and narrower than that found in other sections, and the surface is more uneven with tree roots and small potholes present.



View east along Quincy Shore Drive.

Section 6

This potential connection leads from the main body of the Squantum Point trail towards Wollaston Beach. The section consists of informal and semi-maintained gravel paths directly adjacent to the very busy East Squantum Street and Quincy Shore Drive; neither is a particularly appealing stretch to walk along.



Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
6-1	580	dirt	3	Poor	Poor

An informal gravel track running along the east side of East Squantum Street. The path links the parking lot of Section 7 with the continued informal paths leading to Wollaston Beach to the southeast along Quincy Shore Drive. A crosswalk at the north end connects across East Squantum Street to Section 5.



View south along East Squantum Street.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
6-2	500+	Paved/gravel	5	Good	Poor

A short section of paved sidewalk leads through a pocket park at the northeast corner of the East Squantum Street/Quincy Shore Drive intersection. Benches and potential views to northeast invite visitors, but the intersection traffic and vegetation currently obscuring the views dissuade one from lingering. The paved path connects to a semi-maintained gravel sidewalk leading southeast along Quincy Shore Drive to Wollaston Beach.



Pocket park, viewed south along E. Squantum St. Gravel sidewalk towards Wollaston Beach.

Section 7

This short loop on the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's Moswetuset Hummock is a pleasant tangent to the main Squantum Point trail. A parking lot directly off of East Squantum Street has space for 26 vehicles including two reserved handicap spaces. A crosswalk leads from the parking area across East Squantum Street to trail section 5-8. East Squantum Street is straight at this point, with good visibility in both directions, making for a fairly safe crossing opportunity. Signs indicate that the site is open from dawn to dusk.



A well-built wooden bridge crosses a small channel to a loop trail leading around the wooded hummock. The trail offers fine views to the north and to the east.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
7-1	25	wood	20	Very good	Very good

A short wooden bridge from parking lot.

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
7-2	750	Dirt/gravel	5	Good	Poor

A dirt and gravel foot path averaging 5 feet wide leading north from the wooden bridge, or clockwise around the hummock. The north-facing point of the trail includes excellent views into the salt marsh to the north. A short, gently-sloped stretch leads to the east-facing section of the trail, with excellent view, from a higher viewpoint, into Boston Harbor.



View north on Section 7-2, east side of hummock

Section	Length (ft)	Surface	Width (ft)	Condition	Accessibility
7-3	250	Gravel	10	Good	Fair

This section connects directly to section 7-2 and completes the Moswetuset Hummock loop back to the wooden bridge of 7-1 and the parking lot. This section is surfaced in gravel, is wider than 7-2, and slopes more gently to the east-facing section of the loop.



View along Section 7-3 towards parking area.

Section 8

This is an alternative connection between Sections 2 and 4 and Squantum Point Park (Section 3). The entire route is on road side, some on sidewalk, some on grassy verge. This route is less attractive as a walking route than Section 3, running along parking lots primarily, but could serve as an initial route for the trail while improvements are made to Section 3.

The spur listed as Section 8-6 is an overgrown paved road extending out into the salt marsh. Litter and the untended appearance of this stretch make it a less than appealing walk, however windows through the vegetation offer good views into the salt marsh. The southeast end of Section 8-6 stops at an open channel across from the school bus lot of Section 5-3. Linking these two trail sections with a bridge and boardwalk and screening the school bus and other parking lots would make for a very attractive loop through the marshes.



Conclusions

There is tremendous potential for a safe, attractive, diverse trail network on Squantum Point anchored by a well-signed primary loop that would lead visitors on a walk along the Neponset River and past salt marshes, grasslands, and shrublands, back to their starting point. The primary barriers to a complete loop are:

- 1) Section 5-3, 5-4, 5-5 – The vicinity of the Squantum Gardens development. The most accessible route between Sections 5-2 and 5-6 is currently along East Squantum Street and Quincy Shore Drive (Sections 5-8 and 5-9), however this route runs along busy streets and includes the potentially dangerous Dunkin Donuts parking lot area. Discussions with Squantum Garden developers should focus on a connection from Section 5-3 to 5-5 or 5-6 that avoids the busy intersection.
- 2) Section 3-3 – this section of trail in Squantum Point Park is overgrown and littered, appearing completely un-maintained. Large water puddles make the trail impassable in wet conditions, and a berm of dumped asphalt and dirt across the trail hinders access. Restoration and maintenance of the trail should be discussed with Park management.
- 3) Connection between Sections 3-2 and 3-3 – An open drainage channel separates the two sections. While dry most of the year, wet conditions may make this 15-foot wide channel un-crossable. A small bridge or boardwalk should be installed.
- 4) Connection between Sections 2-2 and 3-1 – A crosswalk from the parking area adjacent to Section 3-1 across Commander O’Shea Boulevard would allow visitors to safely cross this busy street to and from the sidewalk on the east side rather than following the informal trail on the west side of the boulevard.

The primary barriers to connecting the entire loop to the Riverwalk extending south are the derelict and uninviting nature of Section 1-6, the uncertain status of land adjacent to the river between the Neponset Bridge and the MBTA bridge (Section 1-4), and the grassy berm of Section 1-2. Near term action should focus on discussions with the developers regarding a riverfront path, with the City on improvements in Section 1-6, and Adams Inn on continuing their riverfront path to Section 1-2.

Canoe/Kayak Access

The most suitable locations for a canoe and kayak launch are along the Neponset River rather than on the Boston Harbor itself, as the river estuary is more protected from wind and rough water. One option for canoe/kayak access to the river is at the existing dock owned and maintained by the Adams Inn. Access to this private dock is controlled with a gate which is apparently locked most of the time. If access were discussed with Adams Inn, parking, signage, safety and other concerns would need to be negotiated as well. Accommodating boaters could attract customers to the Inn’s adjacent restaurant and bar facilities. The existing Adams Inn dock includes a sloping gangway with railings, of the type used to reach marina docks, connecting to floating wooden dock sections which appear to be removed from the water each winter.

A second option for boat access would be a sandy cut in the riverbank directly south of the Adams Inn dock. Many canoe and kayak users are more comfortable launching from a beach as opposed to stepping into a boat from a dock. Access to this small put-in area would require an agreement with the landowner (Adams Inn or the southerly abutter), and would require parking at the Inn. The riverside itself and adjacent land is subject to litter deposited by the river and tides; however an initial clean-up effort and concerted follow-up would transform this to a very attractive location.

A third option is the small, protected slip in the riverside portion of the land under development directly north of the Neponset Bridge. This location was the subject of a previous proposal for river access which raised concerns of the Quincy Conservation Commission. This previous proposal included construction of a boat ramp on the southeast side of the slip. While a thoughtfully designed and carefully constructed boat ramp would seem to have no additional impact



Wooden pier in Section 1-4, at left of center.

on this already heavily-impacted section of riverfront, use of the existing wooden pier on the north side of the slip may be preferable. Rehabilitation of this wooden pier, with a ramp to a floating dock, would involve less alteration of the armored bank and could provide the added benefit of an attractive riverside sitting and viewing area atop the pier and adjacent grassy area.

A fourth option is the estuary inlet adjacent to Commander O’Shea Boulevard, south of the Boston Scientific facility and trail Section 3-1. This location is very close to public parking, and the water is protected from wind and waves; however water depth would be an issue at low tides. A large culvert, most likely connected to the drainage system of the Boston Scientific parking lots, empties into this inlet. This land south of trail Section 3-1 appears to be part of the DCR Neponset River Reservation.



Estuary inlet south of Section 3-1.

A fifth option is to create a dock at the west end of trail Section 3-1, where it reaches the main body of the Neponset River estuary. This location would require a longer portage from the parking area, and would be more exposed to wind; but it may afford access to more consistently deep water.

Bicycle Access

Bicycle would be a fine way to access large parts of the trail loop; however certain sections present limitations. The primary limitation might be Squantum Point Park, which does not list cycling as an accepted use on its website. Another limitation to cycling may be the extent of trail running on sidewalks along Commander O'Shea Boulevard and East Squantum Street. While experienced riders would most likely be comfortable riding alongside these busy streets, these sections might present challenges for less experienced cyclists and children. A third limitation is the section of trail on the Adams Inn grounds, which is not as wide as the typical Bikepath. Adams Inn management may be reluctant to allow bike users on this section of trail. Finally planning to accommodate cyclists would translate to designing wide new trails in sections where new trail work is required, such as 1-6 and 5-4, sections where narrower footpaths may be more appropriate. An alternative to designing the entire loop to accommodate both foot and bicycle traffic would be to design a bicycle loop that connects the major bike-accessible sections of the trail and the major destinations in a secondary path.