

# City of Boston Response to Wharf District Council Proposal for State Street

June 2022

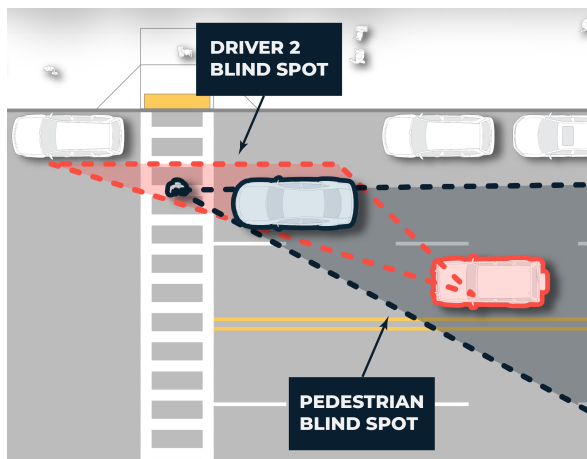
## *Improved pedestrian experience*

### **Wharf District Council: Improved pedestrian experience & safety (at crosswalks in particular)**

Unsignalized crosswalks across two or more lanes of traffic are not safe for pedestrians. Wherever a person walking has to cross two or more lanes of traffic going in the same direction, there is the potential for a multiple-threat crash. This type of crash can lead to serious injuries and fatalities. Fewer lanes makes it easier and safer for pedestrians to cross the street. It eliminates the potential for multiple threat crashes and brings vehicle speeds into a safer range.

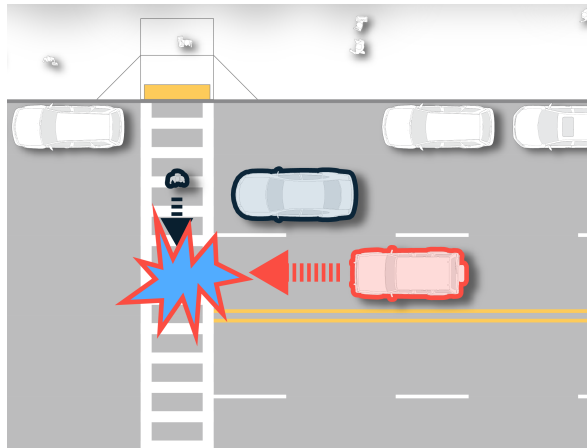
The only way to eliminate the potential for multiple threat crashes across two or more lanes is to install a signal. Adding signals on State Street between Surface Rd and Congress St is not a recommended solution; it would add additional delay for pedestrians and vehicles and significantly reduce the number of locations where people can cross.

## *How a multiple threat crash happens*



Driver 1 yields to a person waiting to cross the street. As the person begins to walk across the street, Driver 2 approaches the crosswalk in the second lane.

Driver 2 cannot see the person in the crosswalk. And, the pedestrian cannot see the car in the second lane. Their views are blocked by the car driven by Driver 1.



Driver 2 does not have enough time to react and strikes the pedestrian.

## West-bound driving routes

**Wharf District Council: State Street is the only west-bound route from the Wharf District to Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and Cambridge. Milk, Sudbury, New Chardon, etc. are all east-bound, and there are multiple no-turn intersections that prevent other alternatives**

State Street will remain open to vehicle traffic. Drivers wishing to use an alternate route may have other options depending on their starting point and destination. Drivers who can't reroute will find the same number of lanes and processing capacity at the State Street/Congress Street intersection, which is a main cause of vehicle delay on State Street. Below are some possible alternative routes that vehicles originating in the Wharf District can take to Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and Cambridge.

### Routes to Back Bay

Back Bay has at least three reroute options for vehicles that do not involve using State Street:



## Routes to Beacon Hill

Beacon Hill has fewer reroute options for drivers:



## Routes to Cambridge

Cambridge has several reroute options for drivers. They involve using Congress Street or I-93 North:



### *Dangerous volumes*

#### **Wharf District Council: Volume of loading and traffic on State Street would make an unsafe bike lane.**

Traffic volume is not a concern with a separated bike lane as bicyclists are not mixing with vehicle traffic. The volume of vehicles turning across the bike facility is a lower concern on State Street because the bike facility is located on the north side of the street and the busier intersecting streets are on the south side (Broad Street, Kilby Street).

Separated bike lanes are compatible with commercial loading with some minor design modifications. On State Street, the City has provided a loading zone between Broad Street and Merchants Row to accommodate larger vehicles that make deliveries. It is 9 ft. wide, two feet wider than a typical parking lane. The buffer between the travel lane and the bike lane is wider than typical at 3.5 ft. The City has provided numerous additional loading zones on Chatham St and the streets that connect Chatham to State St, and has set aside space for short-term pick-up / drop-off activity.

The City has installed separated bike lanes on other streets with a mix of commercial uses that see loading activity throughout the day. Examples include Massachusetts Ave (Back Bay, Fenway), Tremont Street (Theater District), Washington Street (Chinatown), and Commonwealth Ave (BU campus). These configurations function as intended and have not resulted in reported safety issues.

### *Congestion*

#### **Wharf District Council: Backup on State Street is already a problem; further congestion will have a ripple effect all the way to the Mass Pike (as it often does now)**

The biggest cause of vehicle delay on State Street is related to the traffic signal at State Street and Congress Street and the number of lanes on State Street approaching the signal. The City's current pilot design on State Street retained the same number of lanes approaching the intersection (three lanes) as before. The signal at Congress Street is fine-tuned to process vehicles on State Street, Congress Street, and the high volume of pedestrians crossing the intersection. Because of the high volume of vehicles and pedestrians using the intersection, some level of delay can be expected during peak hours. The number of vehicle lanes on the midsection of State Street does not impact vehicle delay at the State Street/Congress Street intersection.

Not enough information is given to provide an adequate response to the assertion that changes on State Street would affect the Massachusetts Turnpike or routes leading to it.

The new design allows emergency vehicles to use the bicycle lane to bypass congestion, if needed, thus improving emergency response compared with current and previous configurations.

*State Street is too narrow*

**Wharf District Council: State Street is VERY narrow (35' from building to building at pinch-point. Bromfield Street is wider.)**

State Street has a pinch point between India Street and Chatham Row where the right of way narrows to 35' building-to-building. The existing curb-to-curb width is 22'; there is a 6' sidewalk on the south side and a 7' sidewalk on the north side. The effective width of the sidewalks is rendered narrower by the presence of utilities. The existing sidewalks are close to the minimum acceptable width and are not adequately wide for the volume of pedestrians on State Street.

Improving the pedestrian experience on State Street is a shared goal among the City and stakeholders. But, having two travel lanes through the pinch point would not allow for any meaningful improvement of the pedestrian experience on State Street. The configuration would be highly constrained and suboptimal for all users. That is because it would require keeping the sidewalks at or close to their current widths; 20' to 22' of the cross section would be needed for two travel lanes. A bike lane and a single vehicle lane would use less width, allowing for more space to be allocated to sidewalks.

Bromfield Street does not have adequate width to accommodate a bike facility while retaining parking.

*Other streets for biking*

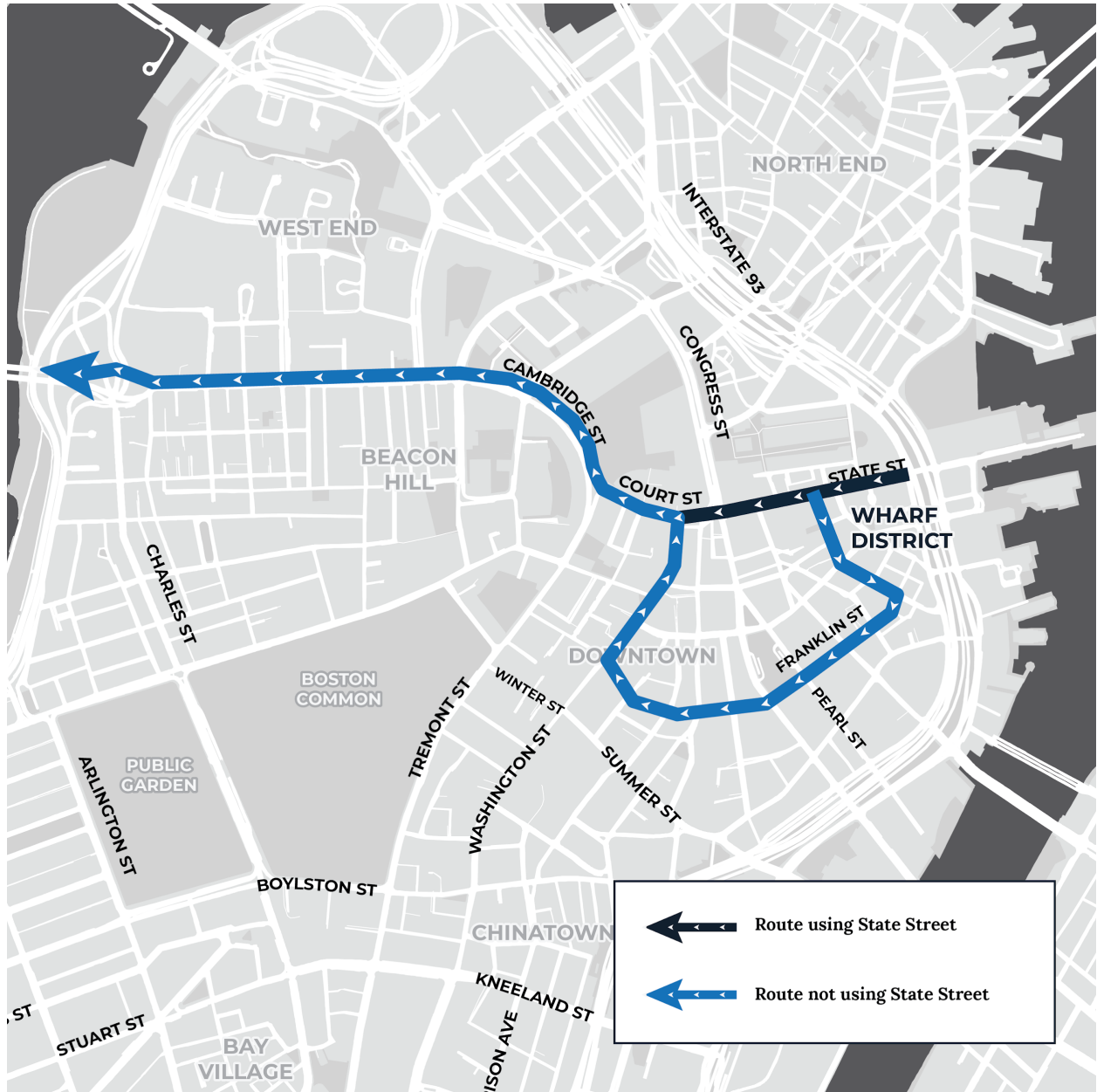
**Wharf District Council: Other streets west-bound streets are much wider, thus better for bike facilities; Hanover= 53'; Franklin = 69'; North = 94'**

[Hanover Street](#) is not a viable alternative to State Street for any travel mode as it is occupied by Haymarket street vendors on Fridays and Saturdays.

[Franklin Street](#) has several issues as an alternative bicycle route:

- Franklin Street does not offer any high-comfort bicycle accommodations except on the block between Arch Street and Hawley St (Tontine Crescent).
- Creating a high-comfort bike facility on Franklin Street would likely require:

- Full removal of parking on the north side of Franklin Street from Broad Street to Pearl Street.
  - Changes to parking and/or the number of travel lanes between Congress Street and Arch Street.
  - Construction of a [bus boarding island](#) on the block between Federal St and Devonshire St.
- Where there is a standard bike lane on Franklin Street, it is often blocked with vehicle uses:
  - On the block between Oliver Street and Pearl Street, there is a valet parking area for the Langham Hotel that typically uses the bike lane for loading.
  - Westbound vehicles queuing at the light at Pearl Street often queue in two lines in spite of the bike lane.
- Between Congress St and Devonshire Street, Franklin St is mixed traffic and overlaps with several MBTA bus routes: Route 7, Route 501, Route 504. Route 7 is a high frequency route.
- Franklin Street does not effectively serve bicyclists bound for Cambridge Street and the Longfellow Bridge, a major commuting route.
- To provide a dedicated route for bicycles to connect from Franklin St to Court St/Cambridge St, the heavily used commercial loading zone along Washington St between Milk St and Court St would need to be removed.



North Street is not a viable alternative to State Street for bicyclists.

- Bicyclists accessing North Street from the Wharf District area do not have a viable route to North Street; they would either have to use the pedestrianized part of Commercial Street at Quincy Market or use a highly circuitous vehicular route.
- There is no bicycle facility on North Street now nor is there one planned.
- This route would require bicyclists to use Congress Street, which does not have a bicycle facility nor is there one planned.
- This route is 0.6 miles longer, taking an additional 5 minutes to bike between the two points on State Street/Court Street.