

Subject: Re: Observations about the plans

I'm not able to make sense of the diagrams so I cannot refer to one or the other specifically. However I understand one or more of the options separate cyclists from pedestrians. In my feedback for the first round I took into consideration how the park and trail would need to be designed to accommodate people with various disabilities. Since you are asking me to imagine MYSELF as a user in each of the various options this time I will comment only on my own experience.

Under present circumstances I have no problem using the park with my wheelchair or with my trike. I seldom visit the park in my wheelchair as I enjoy cycling into West Concord on the BFRT when the weather is favorable. Presently I use the trike in the park as if it were a wheelchair and once off the trail I pedal only at walking speed. I may ride up close to a park bench to speak to someone, cross over to toss trash in the waste basket or just sit on my trike next to a bench or planter to enjoy looking at people or flowers.

I felt a bit hesitant to continue using my trike this way when the walk your wheels signs were put down. However, I figured if I were questioned and had to explain that I am unable to walk my trike so be it. I am careful to go very slowly and pay attention to people walking nearby so I have not had a problem. In similar environments (not JP) when I've had to explain why I'm not complying with WALK YOUR BIKE, most people have understood. A few have accused me of lying or faking as it a common misperception that if you can't walk you shouldn't be able to pedal. In such circumstances if I'm in a generous mood and the accuser seems educable I will view it as a teachable moment and I will take time to educate.

As the need and message to keep cyclists and pedestrians apart increases I anticipate my discomfort around using my trike like a wheelchair in the park will increase. However, the committee is not responsible for accommodating every circumstance or unique need around every disability. We are obligated to do what is best to accommodate the needs of the greatest number of people with various disabilities. If after a season or two we find there are numbers of hand or other type cyclists who want to sit in the park and cannot without violating separate lane rules we can add signage that says except for reasons of disability.

That being said I favor plans that separate cyclists from pedestrians. I think separation benefits the greatest number of people who may be negatively impacted by increased traffic.

I don't have enough data to know if this is best achieved by relocating the retention area or by asking the MBTA to give up the land needed to achieve separating users.

Marybeth