



My Ward Report for May 6, 2020

Dear Fellow East Siders:

I hope you are safe and healthy. Thank you all for taking necessary precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19. I'm confident that our hard work has saved lives. In this edition of my Ward Report, I will discuss the roll out of the Mayor's Slow Streets Program, provide a very important update on the Henderson Bridge Renovation and pass along some good news regarding a grant for the Blackstone Park Trails Network.

SHOUT OUT TO SECRETARY OF STATE NELLIE GORBEA

I'm sure everyone has received their Application for an Emergency Ballot from the Secretary of State's Office for the June 2nd primary. Be sure to submit it before the May 19th deadline. Thank you, Secretary Gorbea, for your leadership. It is so important that we be able to exercise our right to vote during this pandemic, as the very heart of our democracy is at stake.

\$100,000 GRANT AWARD FOR BLACKSTONE PARK TRAILS NETWORK

Kudos to Wendy Nilsson, Providence Parks Superintendent and staff! The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management approved the City's grant application for \$100,000 to improve the Blackstone Park Trails Network. Blackstone Park consists of a 1.6 mile long median that runs down Blackstone Boulevard and 45 acres of natural woodlands that run along the Seekonk River adjacent to River Road and Gulf Avenue. The competition for this grant was very strong and DEM considered this project exceptional.

SLOW STREETS PROGRAM

The Mayor kicked off his Slow Streets Program last Saturday. Thirteen miles of city streets were closed to provide residents with a safe environment to bike, walk and run in their own neighborhoods. The southside of Blackstone Blvd. (from Irving to Elmgrove) was on the initial list of closures. Councilwoman Nirva LaFortune and I asked the Mayor to reconsider closing Blackstone Blvd and after deliberating with his team, the Mayor agreed to keep it open. Eastside streets that were part of the Slow Street initiative were: (1) Brown Street at Meeting Street heading west to Camp Street at Stenton Avenue (in Ward 3), and (2) Governor Street from Angell Street to Wickenden

Street. Yesterday Camp Street from Doyle Avenue to Stenton Avenue was removed from the list due to a number of concerns regarding the impact of the closure on businesses and residents who live on the street.

I am very supportive of the concept of Slow Streets, if it is a collaborative process which includes businesses, residents and councilmembers. If you have any feedback regarding this program for the Mayor or his staff, please call 311.

HENDERSON BRIDGE RENOVATION

There is a very important Virtual Town Hall Meeting tonight at 6:00 p.m. at which RIDOT will present its final design for the renovation of the Henderson Bridge. IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY REGISTERED, PLEASE REGISTER FOR THE MEETING USING THE LINK AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS WARD REPORT. Currently 287 people registered for this Virtual Town Hall. You have to register to attend. Please ask your questions using the chat function during the Meeting. RIDOT has assured me that it will answer all of your questions.

First, thank you, Senator Jack Reed, for securing the funds that will be used to renovate Henderson Bridge. Without your support, we wouldn't be discussing this renovation.

The renovation of the Henderson Bridge is a wonderful opportunity to not only redesign the bridge itself but to redesign the way the traffic exits the bridge and disperses into the Eastside and the City. It's also a wonderful opportunity to preserve and improve our park connectivity and to direct future development.

When RIDOT proposed its initial plans for the Henderson Bridge renovation last spring, those plans included a bridge with two lanes of traffic, one eastbound and one westbound, with bike and pedestrian lanes. It also included a roundabout on the Providence side of the bridge at the point where Waterman Street enters the bridge. While the concept of the roundabout was not perfect, it did allow some of the eastbound traffic to exit South Angell Street before the Butler Street intersection via two-way travel on Waterman Street to Richmond Square. The revised plans include three travel lanes, two westbound and one eastbound, with a two-way bike/pedestrian path. Most importantly, the revised plan does not include any redesign of traffic on the Providence side of the bridge. RIDOT will be quick to say that the redesign is planned for Phase II, and Phase II is only budgeted but not funded. To make matters worse, the redesign of the I-195 Washington Bridge will increase the westbound traffic on the Henderson Bridge by creating a new exit onto Riverfront Drive in East Providence which will connect to the Henderson Bridge.

RIDOT has not had one community meeting regarding its revised plan. Nick Cicchitelli, President of the Fox Point Neighborhood Association, submitted an APRA Request to RIDOT for the documents regarding this renovation. I sent a letter to Governor Raimondo signed by stakeholders including Senator Gayle Goldin, Representative Edie

Ajello, Representative Rebecca Kislak, Representative Chris Blazewski, Councilman-Elect John Goncalves, Councilwoman Nirva LaFortune, Seekonk Riverbank Revitalization Alliance, Fox Point Neighborhood Association, Wayland Square Neighborhood Association and Wayland Square Business Association requesting more transparency and community input regarding RIDOT's renovation of the Henderson Bridge. We received the documents, some of which are hard to decipher, and have received no substantive response to the letter from the Governor's office.

When RIDOT presents its final plans tonight, we will be able to ask questions and voice our concerns, but RIDOT has already put the project out to bid. The plans will not change. We should demand that our voices be heard in the future; that Phase II be funded and begun immediately following Phase I; and that the design of Phase II and the design of the I-195 Washington Bridge renovation be a transparent, collaborative process.

Please feel free to call me at (401) 489-2470, visit www.helenanthony.com, and/or email me at helen@helenanthony.com with questions or comments. Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Anthony". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "H" and "A".



HENDERSON BRIDGE

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL MEETING

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE OFFICE OF BUSINESS OUTREACH, DIVISION OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT, RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

HENDERSON BRIDGE VIRTUAL TOWN HALL MEETING

Join us on May 6, 2020 at 6:00 PM

RIDOT is continuing public involvement for our RhodeWorks projects during the Covid-19 crisis. As part of this effort, the Henderson Bridge Project is our first Virtual Town Hall Meeting. We hope you can join this virtual meeting and invite your friends and neighbors to participate.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

[Register Now](#)