



Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy Testimony on H.3749

Dear Chairman Moore, Chairman O'Day, and all Honorable Members of the Committee,

The Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy appreciates the invitation to supply testimony to the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government regarding **H.3749**, filed by Representative Aaron Michlewitz and Senator Joe Boncore subsequent to approval from Mayor Martin J. Walsh and the Boston City Council.

We would like to speak to the Committee today specifically about the impact this legislation will have on The Greenway while we urge the bill's successful passage.

The Rose Kennedy Greenway, a roof garden atop a highway tunnel, is a contemporary public park built on state land in the heart of Boston. The non-profit Greenway Conservancy maintains, programs, finances, and improves the 1.5-mile Greenway on behalf of the public. The Conservancy was established in 2004 as a 501(c)(3) to raise funds for the public park and upon hitting early fundraising goals was named the steward of The Greenway in 2008 state legislation.

In the years since, The Greenway has blossomed into one of the Commonwealth's most active and popular public spaces. The Greenway hosts over 400 free events annually, including fitness classes, farmers markets, cultural festivals, block parties, movie nights, musical performances, community events, children's activities, artisan markets, and so much more. The park's seven free water features were recently named third-best in the country by *USA Today* while our organic care of the park's lush lawns and beautiful gardens regularly wins raves and awards. Our contemporary art program has received similar honors as the Conservancy commissions, funds, and displays work by local, national and international artists and has four times in the last five years been honored by Americans for the Arts for commissioning one of the nation's best public artworks. And our Greenway Carousel at The Tiffany & Co. Foundation Grove delights over 100,000 riders each year on creatures representing the land, air and sea of New England.

Our non-profit is proud of the work we have done to realize the potential of this important public space, which regularly symbolizes the best of what a public-private partnership can be in Massachusetts. We have worked closely with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation over our short history to ensure The Greenway is a worthy civic amenity to be enjoyed by abutters, statewide residents, and visitors alike. Trackable attendance on The Greenway has increased from 96,000 in 2009 to 1,379,000 in 2016 as the Conservancy's care and activation of the parks continues to drive its success.



The assessed value of properties abutting The Greenway have skyrocketed since the park opened, contributing millions of additional dollars to the City of Boston. And the park has supported the Commonwealth's economy in numerous other ways: Providing commercial opportunities for hundreds of small business owners and artists from around the state, anchoring downtown tourism efforts, providing a platform for innovative local companies and start-ups to reach new audiences, partnering with a local non-profit to offer employment in the park for persons with disabilities, offering corporate wellness and professional development opportunities through volunteerism and partnership programs, and more.

Despite the Conservancy's success in developing The Greenway into a world-class public park, another theme of the park's existence has been an uncertain funding situation. The Greenway is the result of decades of planning, community conversations, and construction which reimagined downtown Boston through completion of the Central Artery Tunnel project. Design decisions made for The Greenway prior to the Conservancy's involvement were decidedly high-end with numerous fountains, each with their own complex computer system, and acres of granite contributing to predictably high ongoing maintenance costs. However, a sustainable funding mechanism has remained elusive. The original funding model--50% public funds and 50% private funds--proved challenging for the fiscally-constrained public sector; since inception, \$37.5M in private funds have been ~60% of the funding. Our balanced 2016 operating budget was approximately \$5M, with \$3M private and \$2M from the Commonwealth through the property owner, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. In other words, through the Conservancy's continued ability to raise private funds and dramatically grow earned income, every \$1 of funding provided by the Commonwealth leveraged \$1.50 in private funds for the public park.

Over the past two years, the Baker Administration and MassDOT officials led a process to engage various stakeholders in a conversation that led to a landmark agreement announced last week that charts a new - and sustainable - course for The Greenway. Together, the Commonwealth, City of Boston, Greenway Conservancy, and a group of privately-owned Greenway-abutting commercial properties represented by A Better City are prepared to ensure the long-term vitality and continued improvement of The Greenway. We would not be at this place without significant, bipartisan political leadership offered by Governor Baker, Mayor Walsh, Representative Michlewitz, Senator Boncore, the Boston City Council, and various other government officials who understood the particular challenge of ensuring The Greenway's continued place as a treasured civic amenity. Further, commercial property owners have stepped up to join private sector philanthropists in playing a huge role in funding the public park.

Greenway funding from the City of Boston--possible with the passage of H.3749--was a key element in bringing all parties together for a final deal. We are excited that The Greenway and



other public parks will be the recipients of funding subsequent to adoption of this bill, and we urge the Committee to recommend passage of H.3749.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Brackenbury', is positioned above the typed name.

Jesse Brackenbury, Executive Director
Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy

