Pedaling bridge safety in the commonwealth

Reaching the foot of the Neponset River Bridge on bike each morning, Jasmin Burke thinks, "My nemesis!" before navigating potholes, debris and, worst of all, rush hour traffic that dumps into perhaps the most nefarious rotary in the city.

"It's the one portion in my ride that's most difficult and I usually ride on Morrissey Boulevard," the Quincy resident said of her eight-mile commute to her South Boston office. "And that's not as bad."

The majority of commonwealth bridges are no joy ride and Burke is one of hundreds of bike advocates making sure the state's Accelerated Bridge Program accounts for two-wheelers too.

Over the next eight years, $3 billion in funding will be accelerated to improve the commonwealth's most neglected bridges.

"The biking community has been taking a stance every time they do this type of project," Burke said. "Every time they have a community meeting we have someone go make sure they know they need to take this into consideration.

"The movement is coming slowly but surely."

Burke, a member of DotBike and the Quincy Bike Committee, hopes state officials will eventually account for bikers needs without much prodding.

"The infrastructure is first and foremost," said MassDOT's Highway Division Administrator, Luisa Paiewonsky, "but we recognize there are many different uses of structures, not just vehicles crossing these bridges.

"We certainly welcome them to our meetings but multimodal travel is already a part of daily thinking at MassDOT."

Justin A. Rice

Your turn:

"I've biked this bridge and it's great to hear improvements are coming. It's no picnic for drivers, let alone bikers. I do hope MassDOT knows bikes ARE vehicles -- same rights, same responsibilities."

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(2 comments)