Commonwealth Avenue Reconstruction and Landscape Improvements

Client/Owner: City of Newton
Project Location: Newton MA

Commonwealth Avenue (Route 30) was originally designed in 1893 by Frederick Law Olmstead and a group of civil engineers to provide the westerly gateway to the City of Boston from Newton. The corridor is within the Commonwealth Avenue Historic District and encompasses residential, commercial and institutional segments. The roadway consists of a two-lane arterial with a one-way carriageway (frontage road) separated by a wide reservation originally used for the electric trolley line extension from Brighton. When the trolley line was removed, the reservation remained as green space enhancing the "boulevard" character of the corridor. In 1993, a master plan was developed to reconstruct Commonwealth Avenue and create a linear park by adding landscape treatments and site furnishings to the reservation.

In accordance with the master plan, GPI has undertaken the design for the reconstruction of the two mile segment from Newton City Hall to the Boston line. The horizontal and vertical geometry was reviewed in order to determine locations of specific improvements and the project includes upgrades to three signalized intersections. Extensive landscape enhancements, site furnishings and period street lights were added to the reservation to create the linear park. Neckdowns and textured crosswalks have been constructed along the carriageway to calm traffic and discourage through vehicles from using the carriageway as an alternative to the mainline. Work also included relocating drainage and utilities to accommodate modifications to the horizontal and vertical geometry. Test cores were taken from the existing pavement in order to evaluate potential reconstruction options. Design work has also required environmental permitting and coordination with the City of Boston, Boston College and other involved agencies. The first of two phases has been constructed and the second is currently under design.

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