



Commonwealth Avenue is one of the most heavily trafficked thoroughfares in Boston.

CYCLE TRACKS COMING TO COMM AVE

\$20 million project part of major multipart reconstruction

TRAVELING ON COMM AVE is about to get safer, for bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. State transportation authorities have approved a \$20.4 million reconstruction of Commonwealth Avenue between Brookline and Boston, from the BU Bridge to Packard's Corner, an upgrade that will include long-awaited cycle tracks between parked cars and sidewalks.

Michael Donovan, the University's vice president for real estate and facility services, says the project, which will begin early next year, should be completed in three years.

After years of debate about how to make Comm Ave safer for cyclists and pedestrians, a joint BU-city working group in 2013 recommended more warning signs, better bike lane markings,

and highway reflectors. The city unveiled the cycle track plan in March 2015.

Comm Ave is one of the most heavily trafficked thoroughfares in Boston; about 35,000 vehicles, 30,000 pedestrians, and 27,000 Green Line T riders use it daily, according to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). The commonwealth estimates that about 3,000 cyclists a day used the road in 2014.

MassDOT highway administrator Tom Tinlin says the stretch of roadway has had an “inordinate” number of bicycle crashes. More than 75 percent of the 121 bike accidents that the BU Police Department responded

to from 2010 to 2015 occurred on Comm Ave.

The overhaul will move and widen bike lanes, now located between parked cars and traffic lanes, on the stretch of pavement between Packard’s Corner and the BU Bridge. The new bike lanes, which will range in width from five to six and a half feet and line both sides of Comm Ave, will be separated from traffic by a row of parked cars and by three-foot-wide raised buffers between the parking lane and the cyclists, a design similar to one used on some Manhattan streets. The outbound side of the street, which currently has three lanes, will lose a driving lane, bringing it down to two lanes. The inbound side of the street, which currently has only two lanes, will not lose a lane.

David Anderson, MassDOT’s deputy chief for design, says the cycle track will eliminate the hazard of a car door swinging into a bicyclist’s path, and new traffic islands will mean pedestrians have a shorter distance to cross.

Another major upgrade to the area will take place in the summers of 2017 and 2018, with an \$81.8 million replacement of the Commonwealth Avenue deck over the Mass Turnpike.

AMY LASKOWSKI

**COMM AVE
DAILY USAGE**

35,000

Vehicles

30,000

Pedestrians

27,000

Green Line T riders

3,000

Cyclists

3Q

Three questions for

AMY GELLER (COM'16)



Amy Geller’s film premiered at the Sarasota Film Festival in April, and later was screened at the Independent Film Festival Boston and the Provincetown International Film Festival.

Amy Geller’s new documentary is about a married mother of three, Rachel Segall, who carries a baby for her old college friend Erik Mercer and his husband, Sandro Sechi. *Twice. The Guys Next Door*, by Geller (COM’16), a College of Communication MFA graduate, and Allie Humenuk, follows the families over two years.

Were the families open to being filmed?

They were incredibly open. I don’t think they quite knew what was happening: we just said we were going on this journey with them and would keep in touch at every step of the way.

Erik said it was our sense of humor that brought us all together. Very quickly, we established lines of trust. You can see in the movie that they have a wonderful sense of humor and they are fabulous people to hang out with, and we felt that and wanted to share that with an audience. I think they felt that we would protect their story and not exploit them. As a filmmaker, you want to tell a good story, but you want to honor the trust that you have been given by your subjects.

Did you have an idea of what the narrative would be when you began?

By the time we started shooting the story, Rachel was eight months pregnant with the second child, so it didn’t feel like the end of the entire story; for us, it felt like the beginning, a turning point. We traveled back to Sardinia, Italy, where Sandro is from, and that was another turning point in the film. As for the rest of the structure, we didn’t really know, and that was a big part of what we hashed out in the edit room—the layering of the three main characters, interweaving their stories, the development of Erik and Sandro as parents and the issues they go through, and Rachel’s role in the lives of that family as well as her family, and then the two families together. That was the dance we had to play in the edit room.

How did you know when to stop filming?

That was really hard. Originally we had conceived of it as a year in the life, and we shot it that way, and stopped after one year. As is often the case with filmmaking, it became clear to us that time was actually a character in the movie, and we realized that we wanted to see these kids get older and how the families weaved together. AL



ONLINE: Watch the trailer for *The Guys Next Door* at bu.edu/bostonia.