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Rollin' along

What has happened to plans for a skateboard park close to the Science Museum where the skaters were to have a hand in the design?

Plans are in place and fund-raising is proceeding, says Sarah Tindall, parklands project coordinator of the Charles River Conservancy, the organization spearheading the project. "We have raised a little over \$825,000 so far, within a budget of \$2.1 million," she said as the new year dawned. "This money has come from foundations, individuals, corporate gifts, and pledges from the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the City of Cambridge. Also, as part of the supplemental Capital Budget bill, the Legislature has earmarked money for skate park design and construction; the House approved \$75,000 and the Senate approved \$150,000. The bill is before a conference committee that will set the actual amount, and then it will go to the governor for his signature." The Conservancy is hoping that money will be available soon, Tindall says.

If all goes according to plan, construction would begin this year, and the park would be opened early next year. The 1-acre facility near the Museum of Science will be one element of a much larger 40-acre North Point Park project to be built on the riverside of the Lower Charles with Big Dig mitigation money -- the area has been left pretty much a concrete-bounded desert by the construction of roadways around and above it -- on what is known officially as Parcel 29F. Skate park planners expect the mix of sun and shadow on the riverbank site that sits under one of the ramps to the Zakim-Bunker Hill Bridge to be attractive to skateboarders, inline skaters, and BMX bikers.

And who's to say that the lure of the park won't diminish the ranks of skateboarders in places like Copley Square?

The Conservancy estimates that about 25 percent of greater Boston's youth, as well as growing numbers of young adults, skateboard, inline skate, or BMX bike. The notion behind Charles River Skatepark, with its 40,000 square feet, is that it will provide these athletes with a venue where they can safely and legally practice, exhibit, and compete. It is also one that will be easily accessible by public transportation. There are, notes the Conservancy, four T-stops within walking distance of the site -- Science Park and Lechmere on the Green Line, Community College and North Station on the Orange Line -- as well as numerous bus routes. More than 400 young men and women from the Boston area, through public meetings and e-mails, have joined discussions about the makeup of the park with its designer, Zach Wormhoudt. They have also helped with fund-raising, according to the Conservancy.

Once completed, the skate park will be owned and operated by the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (formerly the MDC) and supervised as a state-run facility, which will mean State Police officers and DCR park rangers will be on the watch. Hours of operation have yet to be set, but the Conservancy is hoping for a 24/7 setup, citing experiences at other skate parks around the country where continual activity and bright lights have discouraged what it calls "illicit activities."

For more information, go to <http://www.thecharles.org/> and click on About the Skatepark.

Measured miles

I ride the Red Line from Harvard Square through Central and Kendall squares to Park Street and back every day and have always wondered how many miles there are between the stations.

When the Cambridge subway was opened in 1912, the Boston Elevated Railway told its riders that it was .97 of a mile from Harvard Square to Central Square, .96 of a mile from Central to Kendall Square, and 1.27 miles from Kendall to Park Street, for a total length of 3.2 miles.

Wondering about something you've seen in Boston? Want to know how something in the city works? Send your questions to FYI, City Weekly, The Boston Globe, PO Box 55819, Boston MA 02205-5819. Or e-mail them to fyi@Globe.com. ■

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