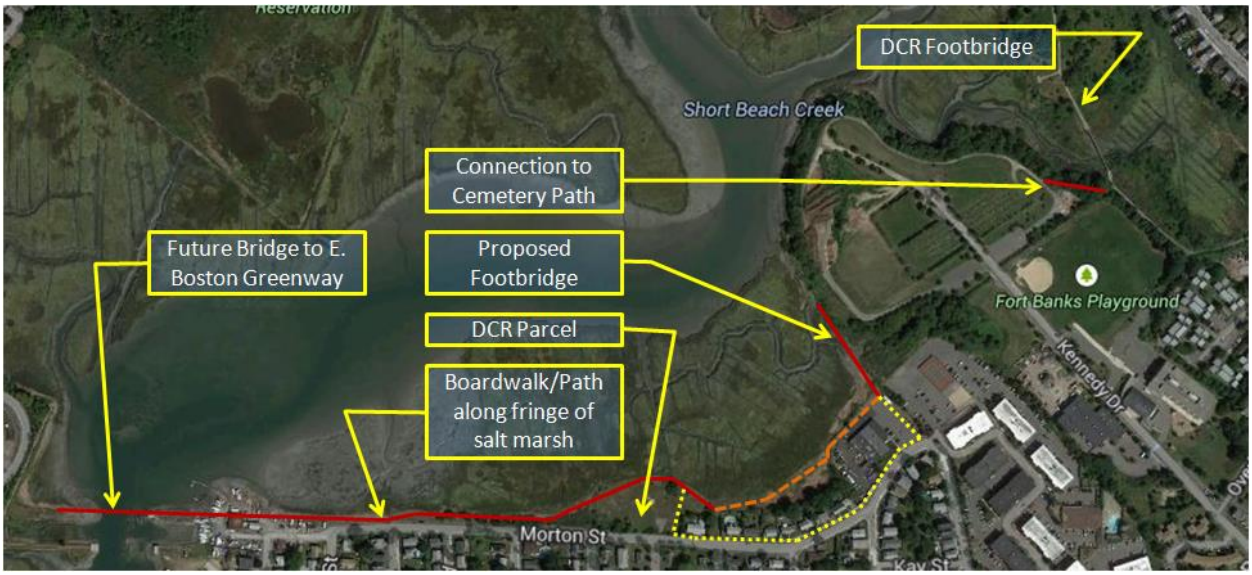
The Vision

The urban wilds of the Belle Isle saltmarsh represent a unique and rare asset shared by Winthrop, Revere and East Boston. Bringing the public safely to the fringes of this coastal ecosystem would enhance appreciation and provide an educational experience. The Belle Isle Trail, proposed as a series of boardwalks and soft upland pathways, will explore both the tidal marshlands and the bordering vegetated uplands, which provide habitat to the species of plants and animals that thrive in the fringes.

Healthy salt marshes, while low in diversity of plant species, nevertheless are very productive habitats. Deposits of organic matter decompose, providing sustenance for a broad food chain of organisms ranging from bacteria to fish and birds, and also to mammals.

As a timely topic, the path will also provide an opportunity to teach how natural systems can be resilient in the face of sea level change through accretion and self-propagation.

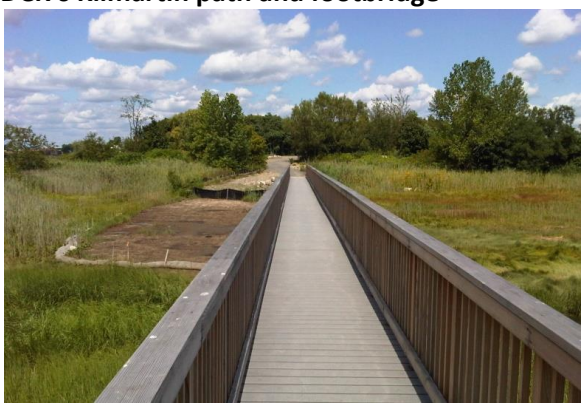


The Connections

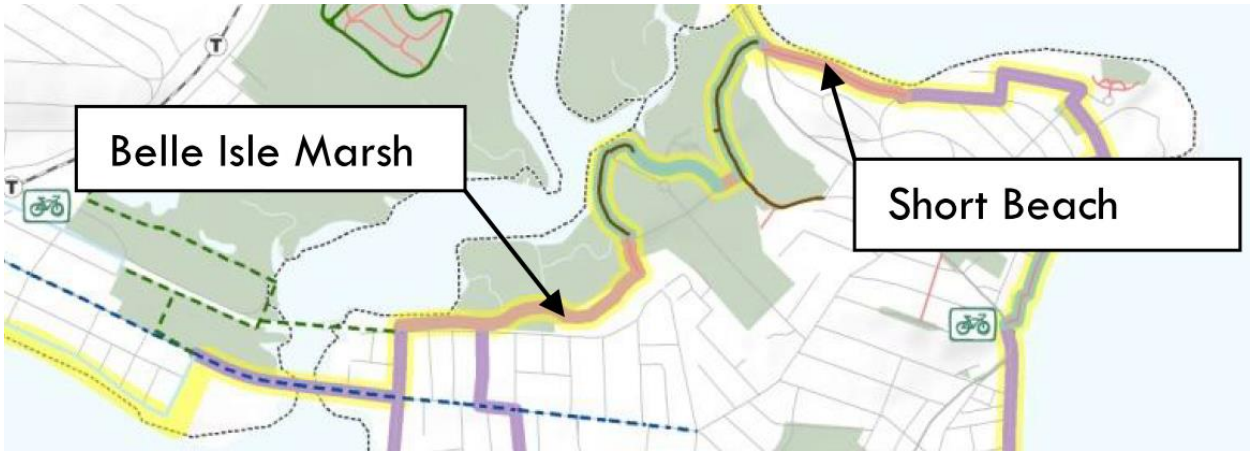
The Belle Isle Path will be a link in a network of paths connecting the ocean at Short Beach via DCR's Kilmartin footbridge and path, and connecting to the East Boston Greenway. The East Boston Greenway is a series of existing and planned harborwalks and bikeways, connecting the waterfront on Boston Harbor to Belle Isle Marsh.

Ultimately, this network of existing and planned pathways would provide access to the marsh environment for the neighboring populations in East Boston and Revere.

DCR's Kilmartin path and footbridge



The East Boston Greenway extending to the west side of Belle Isle Marsh



Elements of the Path

Similar to the nearby DCR Kilmartin Path and Footbridge, the Belle Isle Path will consist of boardwalks, footbridges, and soft surface pathways (stabilized stone dust) on upland areas. The footbridges and boardwalks will be used where the path ventures into the floodplain. They will be constructed to minimize impact on the salt marsh. Similar to the Kilmartin footbridge, they will use helical screw piles which are easy to install and suitable for low pressure soils in the marsh. Wood framing will give them a natural look. The use of wood-textured recycled plastic for floorboards will provide a splinter-free walk surface.

Upland portion of Kilmartin Path with stabilized stone dust surface

A marsh overlook along the Kilmartin Path.

Helical piles were used to support the footbridge, to minimize impacts to the salt marsh

Wood-textured recycled plastic for floorboards will provide a splinter-free walk surface while allowing daylight to shine through to the marsh.


DCR
Belle Isle Marsh Reservation
Short Beach
Short Beach Parking and Trail Entrance
Existing Path
Short Beach Creek
Existing Path
Foot Bridge
Existing Path
Cemetery
Proposed Path Connection
Connection to Existing Path
Banks Playground
Proposed Path to Kennedy Dr. and Recreational Fields
Foot Bridge
Ramp Access to Boardwalk
Improved Municipal Lot
Wood Boardwalk with Overlooks
Proposed DCR Park - Lawn, Paths, Overlook, Picnic Shelter
Overlook Tower
Proposed Improvements- Parking and Overlook
New Sidewalk
Morton St
Kay St
Edward St
Main St
Belle Isle Seafood
Pleasant St
Amelia Ave
Fairview St
Read St
Kennedy Dr
Golden Dr
Argyle St
Belle Isle Marsh Eco-Walk
Winthrop, MA
December 2014
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