

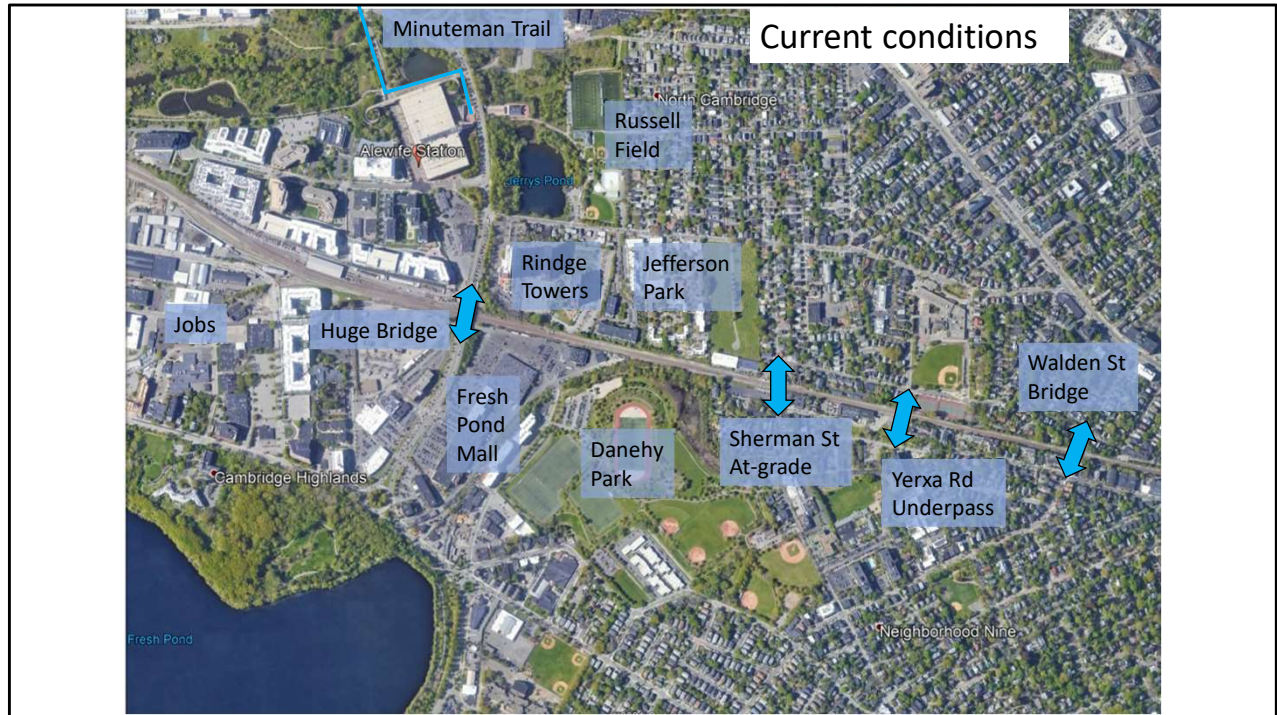
Alewife Connectivity

Presentation to the Neighborhood and Long-Term Planning Committee June 2, 2021

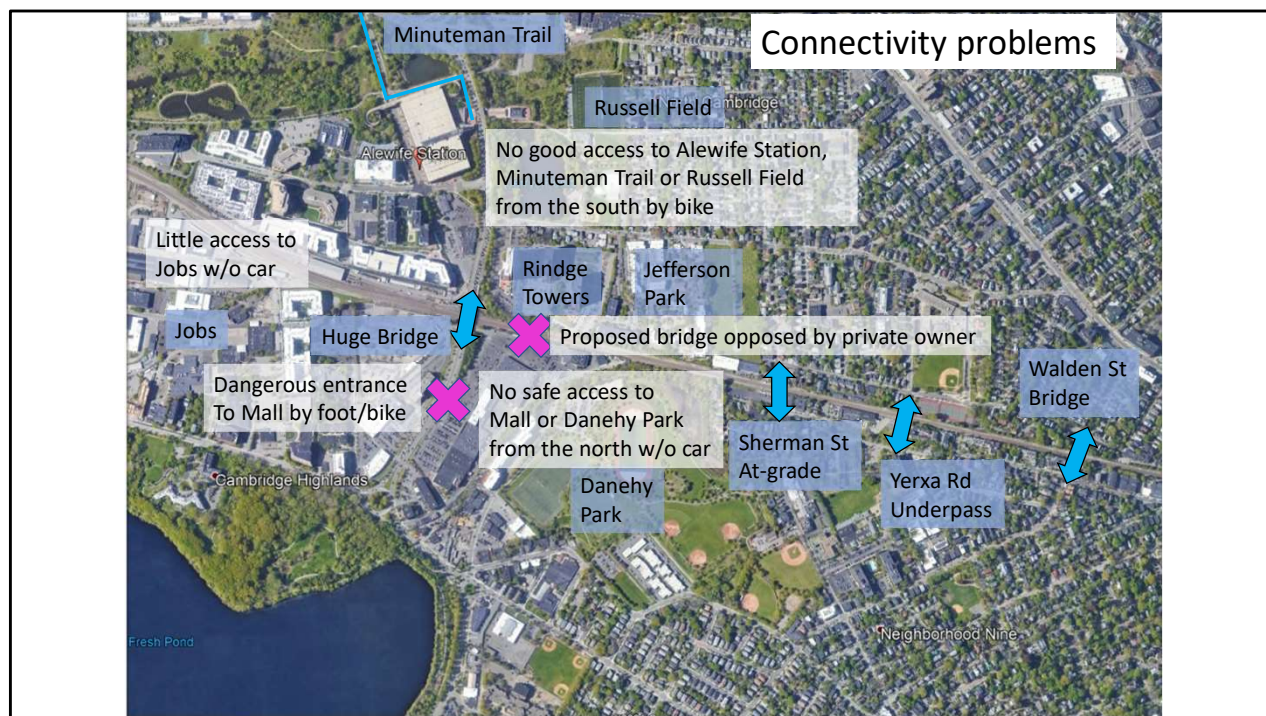
Prepared by Mike Nakagawa, June 1, 2021

Additions by Mike Nakagawa, November 8, 2021

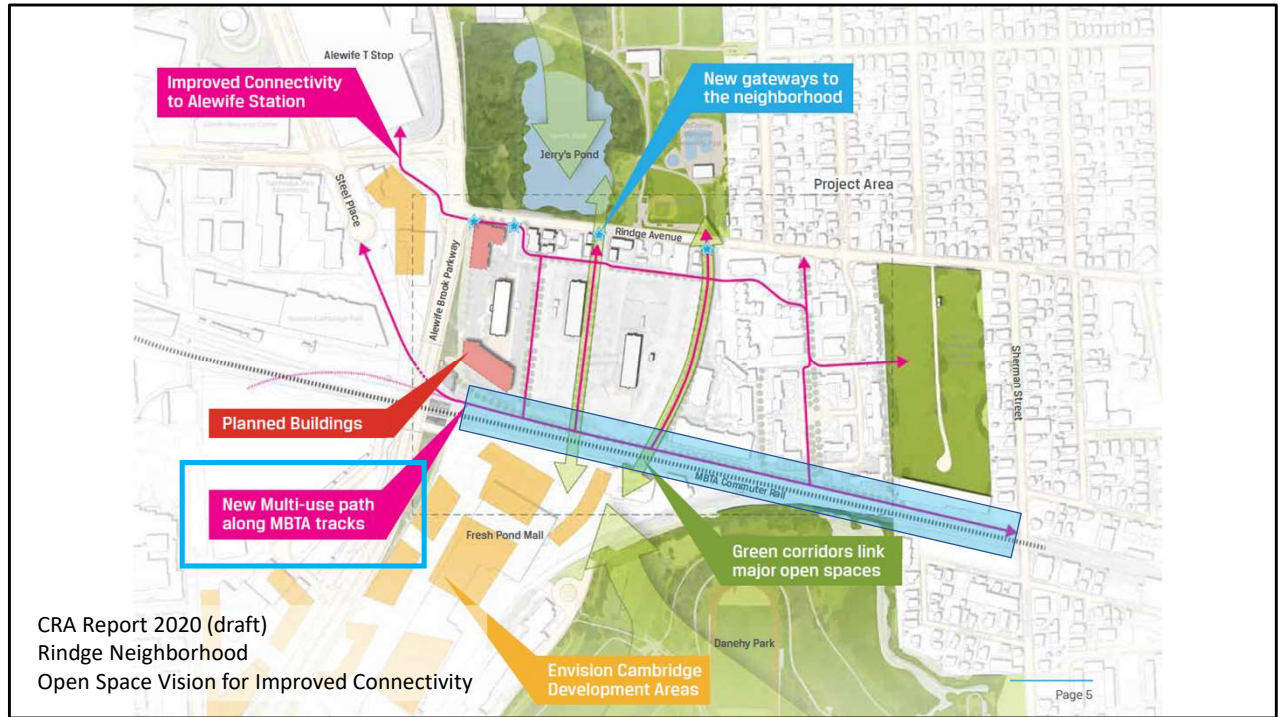
Additions by Mike Nakagawa, April 30, 2022 responding to proposed CDD Danehy/New St. path
<http://AlewifeNeighbors.org/projects/connectivity/AlewifeConnectivity-20220430.pdf>



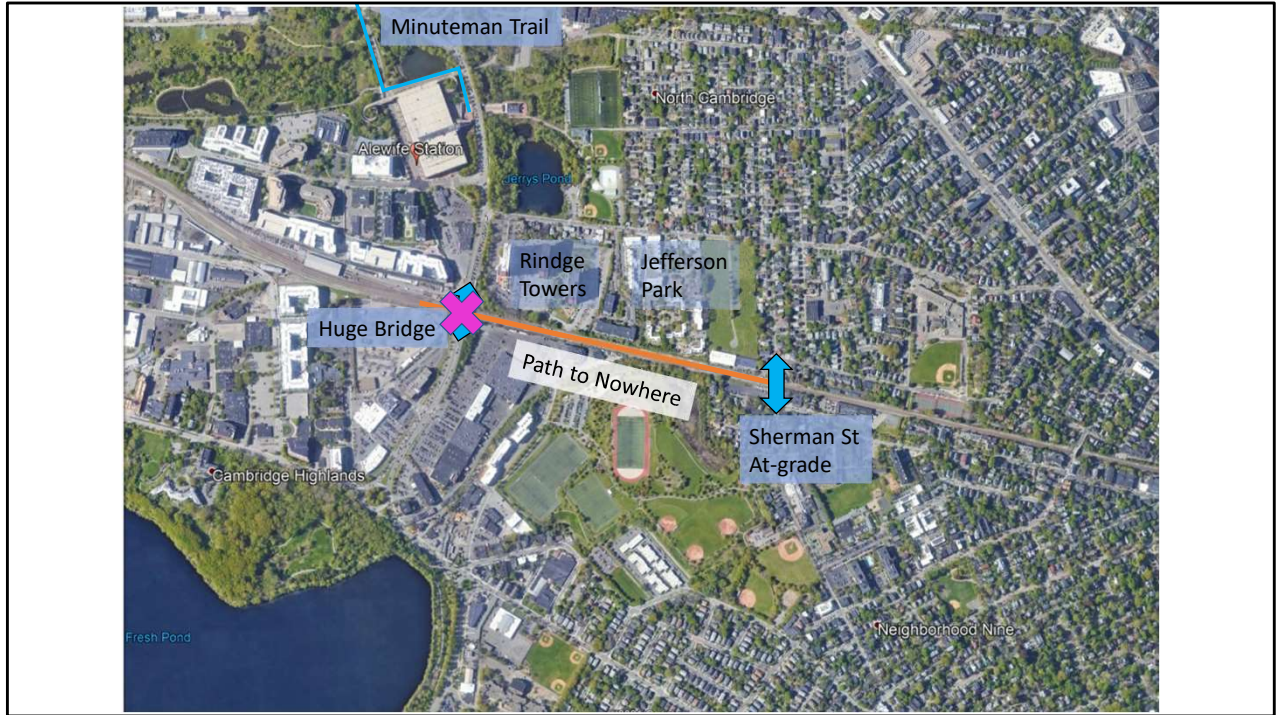
Hi, I'm Mike Nakagawa on the leadership teams of the Alewife Study Group, Fresh Pond Residents Alliance, and Alewife Neighbors, Inc. as well on the City's Climate Change Resiliency Planning. I have a few slides with only a few point each, so this will move quickly. This picture shows how the Commuter Rail tracks separate North Alewife with the Red Line, Minuteman Trail, Russell Field and the highest concentration of affordable housing in the City, and South Alewife with Danehy Park, jobs in the Quadrangle, and retail at and across Fresh Pond Mall. There are only three crossing points in the area...



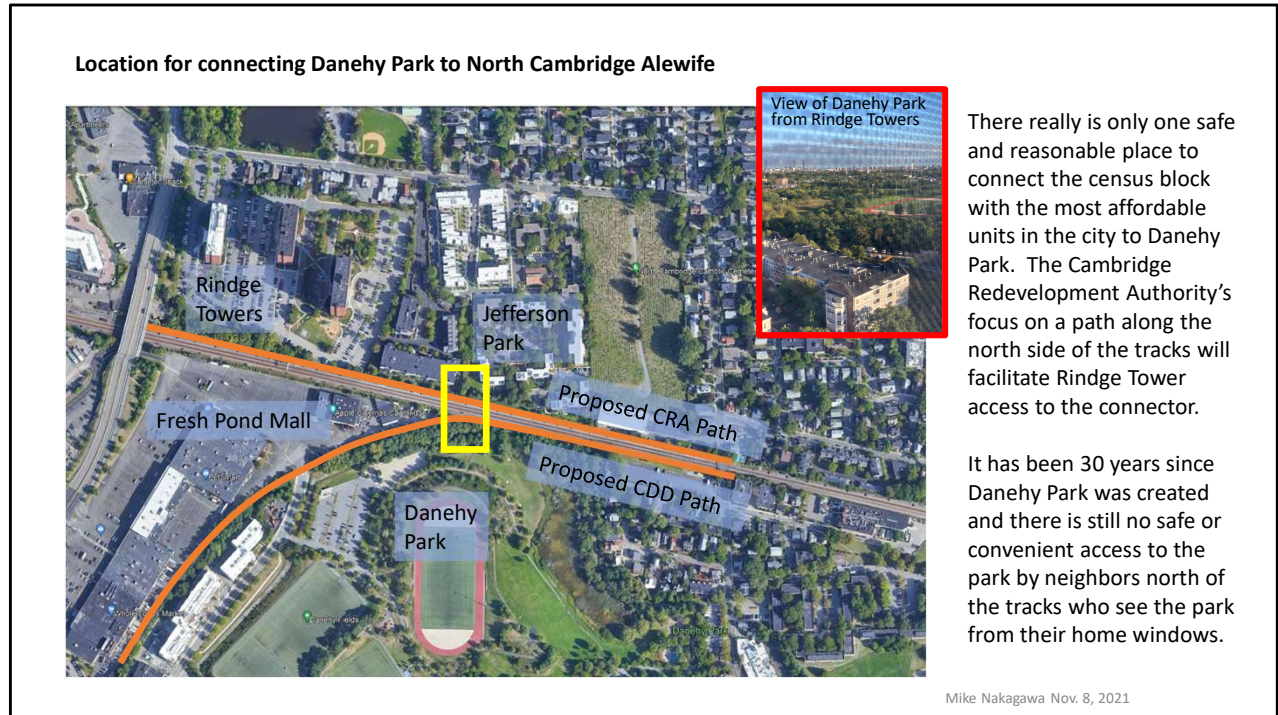
...which means there are connectivity problems. There is no safe access to the Mall or Danehy Park from the north without a car. There is no good access to Alewife Station or the Minuteman Trail from the south by bike. There is little access to jobs in the Quadrangle without a car. The entrance to Fresh Pond Mall by foot or bike is very dangerous, and a proposed bridge from Rindge Towers to the Mall parking lot has been opposed by the private property owner.



This is the overview picture from Cambridge Redevelopment Authority's draft report from October of last year. First priority is a multi-use path along the north side of the tracks



However, it is a path to nowhere. It doesn't connect to the Parkway bridge. It doesn't connect to any destination better than what exists now.



CRA is proposing a path along the north side of the commuter rail tracks and the Community Development Department is proposing one along the south side but neither plan connects to the other side of the tracks. If the connection is made, there would be no need to spend money on paths on both sides of the tracks east of the connection; use that money to help fund the underpass. This point is a safer landing zone than the Fresh Pond Mall parking lot, and all the land is owned by public entities.

Why an underpass and not a bridge?



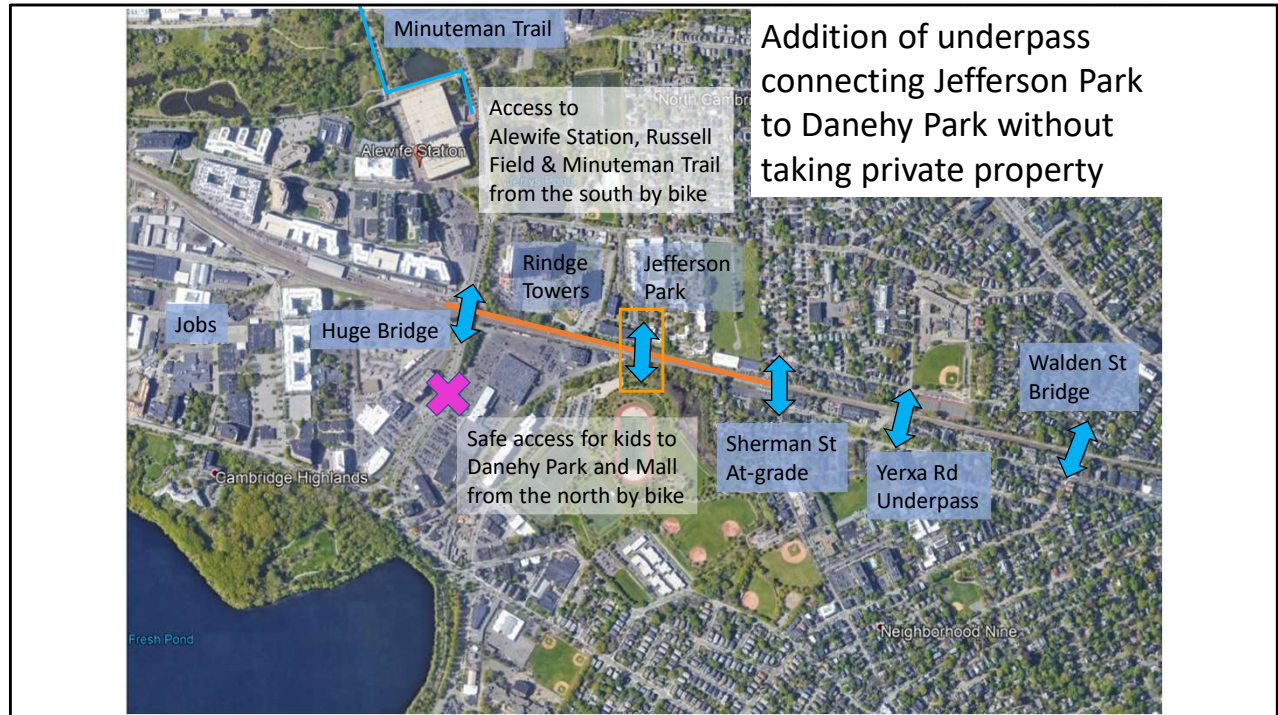
A bridge over the train needs to be about twice the vertical distance as an underpass would need to be, which can be significant for people with mobility issues. The added height also increases the horizontal distance because switchbacks are needed to keep from being too steep.

An underpass is also much better for cyclists who can coast down then use the momentum to go up the other side. A bridge requires a lot of effort to go up at the start, and the effort is wasted in braking all the way down.

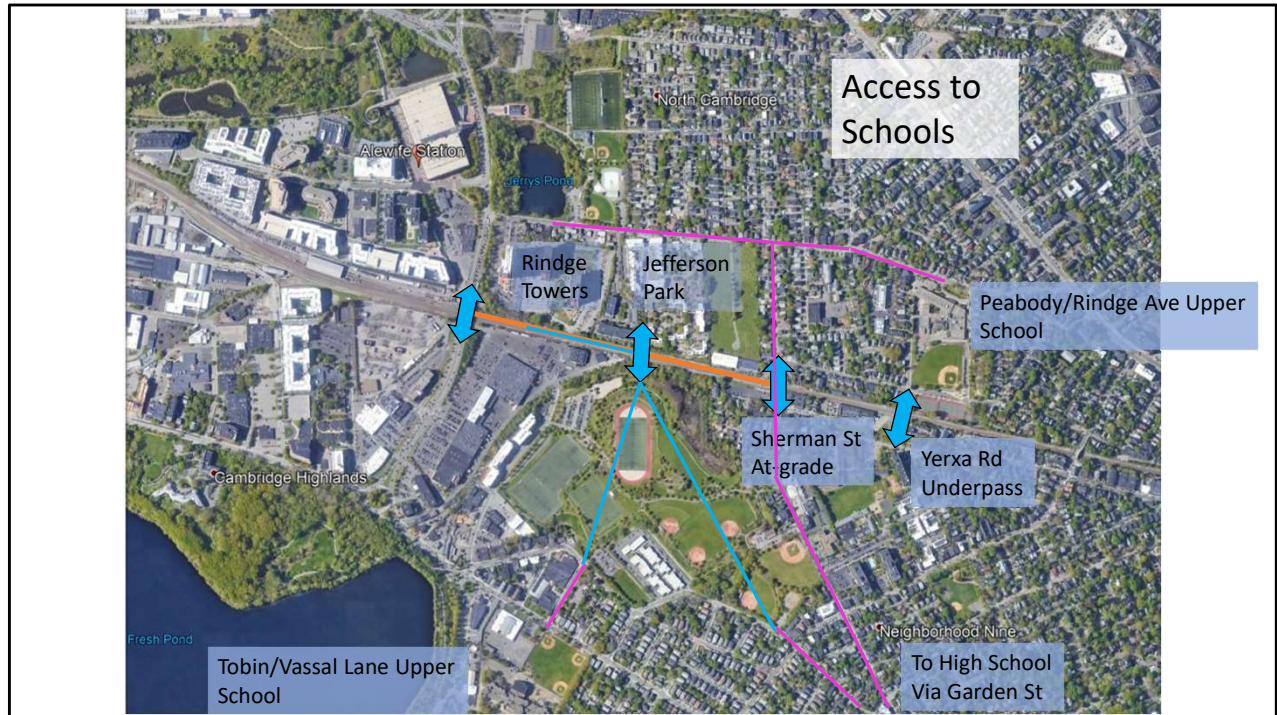
The Yerxa Rd underpass shows a clear sightline to the opposite side so the general safety is not a concern. There may be times that an underpass may not feel safe (weather or darkness), but that should not prevent having much better access for the overwhelming majority of users most of the time. Currently there is no alternative any of the time.

Mike Nakagawa Nov. 8, 2021

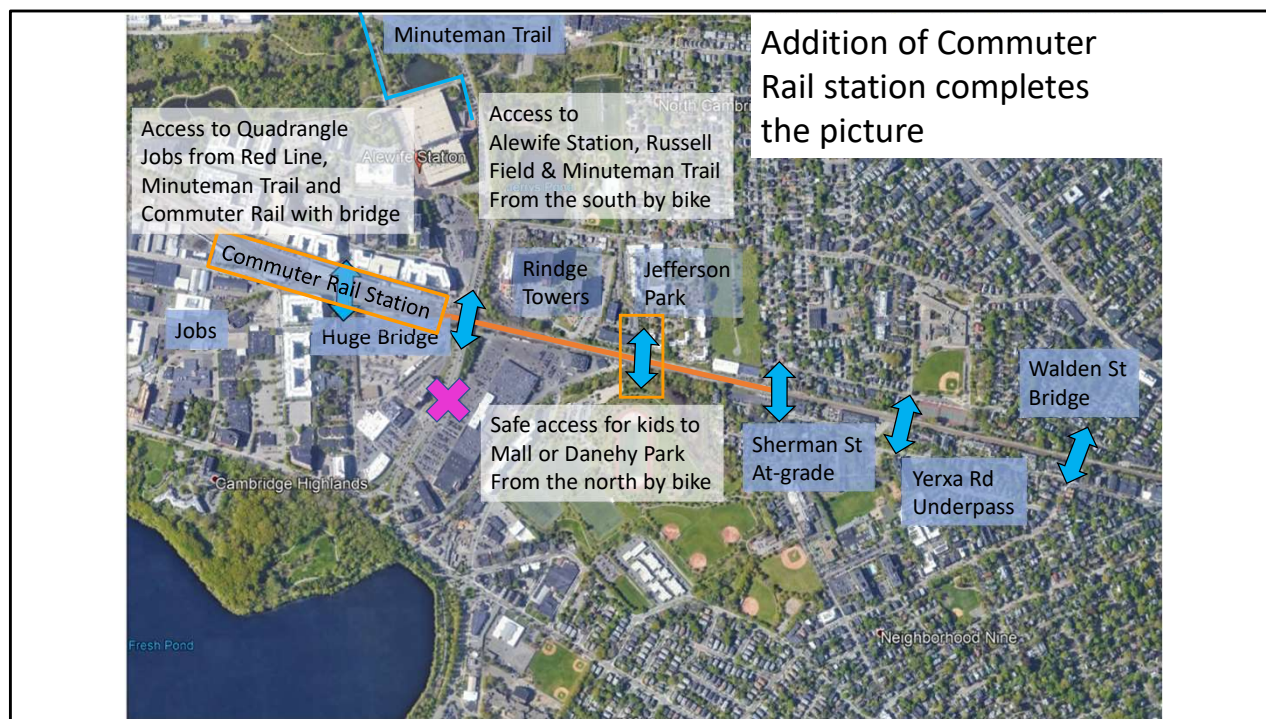
One concern about an underpass is being near the edge of a floodplain. But flooding is infrequent, and it would be better to have access most of the time instead of not having access any of the time.



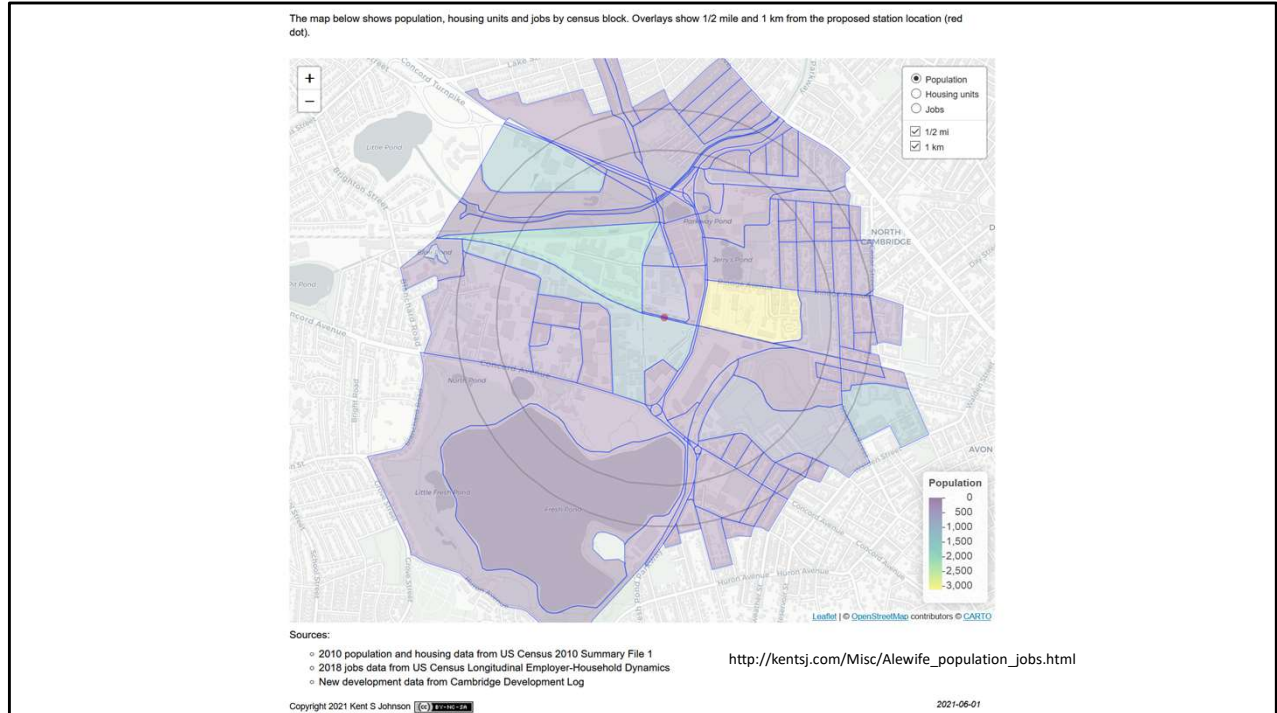
Adding an underpass between Jefferson Park and Danehy Park makes the much needed connection of north and south. There would then be safe access for kids to sports fields and recreation at Danehy Park and Russell Field and a safe way to Fresh Pond Mall. Residents to the south would have safe bike access to the Red Line, Minuteman Trail and Russell Field. Underpasses are much easier for cyclists than bridges, gaining momentum going down to help going up on the other side.



Kids' safety is one of my big concerns. Access to Peabody School from Rindge Towers and Jefferson Park is a long way down Rindge, shown in magenta. Biking is a key way for athletes to get to the high school without worrying about being late because of frequent transit or traffic delays, but Rindge and Sherman are very dangerous for youth cyclists. Adding the underpass reduces travel along dangerous roads by cutting through Danehy Park to get to the Tobin School or to the high school using Garden St.



A Commuter Rail station completes the picture because it would come with a way to get across the tracks allowing access to jobs from the Red Line and Minuteman Trail as well as the Commuter Rail. The Commuter Rail gives local residents access to suburban jobs without a car. Residents in the Quadrangle can also access the Red Line and Minuteman Trail, and to reach Alewife jobs there would be reduced need for cars taking Fresh Pond Parkway, what the 2019 governor's report said was the second most congested roadway in the state at 14 hours of congestion per day.



I asked Kent Johnson to look at population, housing and employment data around a possible commuter rail station to compare with an analysis in 2015 for a commuter rail stop. I asked for data using both 1/2 mile and 1 km from the station, which are considered to be within walking distance, and the circles show the areas, with the larger being the 1 km boundary

Table 1. Station Area Demographics (1/2 mile from station)

Station Area (Service)	Existing		
	Population	Housing Units	Employment
Alewife (Red Line)	8,139	3,607	6,056
Chelsea Station (Commuter Rail/future Silver Line)	20,377	6,453	3,696
Uphams Corner (Commuter Rail)	16,626	5,972	3,497
JFK/UMass (Red Line/Commuter Rail)	13,294	5,832	3,001
Quincy Center (Red Line/Commuter Rail)	6,504	3,567	2,049
Forest Hills (Orange Line/Commuter Rail)	6,544	3,181	2,932
West Medford (Commuter Rail)	6,864	2,909	1,616

* Population & Housing Units from 2010 Census
 ** Employment from 2012 ZIP Code Business Patterns (NAICS, U.S. Census Bureau)
<http://censtats.census.gov/cgi-bin/zbpnaic/zbpsect.pl>

Table 2. Alewife Commuter Rail Station Area Demographics (1/2 mile from station)

Time Period	Population	Housing Units	Employment
2010/2012 Existing Demographics	6,270	2,701	6,056
2020 Projected Demographics	8,520	3,686	9,301
2021 Actual Demographics 1/2 mile	12,465	5,679	10,461
2021 Actual Demographics 1 km	17,328	7,970	11,142
Projected Demographics 1/2 mile	13,175	6,006	11,961
Projected Demographics 1 km	18,038	8,297	12,642

} Data from
 Kent Johnson
 } Adding only IQHQ, Jefferson Pk and
 Just-A-Start at Rindge and New St

http://kentsj.com/Misc/Alewife_population_jobs.html

I won't go into the details, but Alewife population, housing, and jobs generally far exceed the standards of other commuter rail stops and make a compelling case for one, with more development still to come. Putting the underpass and Commuter Rail station in one project would correct a lot of the issues we have in this long-neglected part of town. This is the time to act with Jefferson Park currently being redesigned with draft plans almost ready for permits. We need to make sure the plans don't preclude an underpass.