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ALLSTON BRIGHTON

State expects to soon repair 283-year-old milestone in Allston

Posted by Matt Rocheleau May 3, 2012 05:58 PM

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A photo of the milestone days after it was severed on July 28, 2011, when a truck backed into it.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

After being struck by a truck, severed in two and given a temporary fix, a 283-year-old stone mile marker along an Allston sidewalk has been caged in by four metal police barriers for the past nine months.

Officials say the Colonial-era milestone is under house arrest for its own protection. But, appeals have been made for the imprisoned boulder to be liberated.

“Free the rock,” read some [comical flyers](#) posted nearby recently.

Soon, state officials plan to do just that.

The stone along Harvard Avenue – which reads “Boston 6 miles” – is one of four remaining in Boston and one of 47 known statewide out of at least 99 that once existed. The old milestones are overseen by the state Transportation Department.

“It is going to be virtually impossible to tell that it was cracked or severed,” department spokesman Michael Verseckes said.

The stone known as “Marker #6” was knocked over, broken in two and sat on its side for several days after a truck backed into it in [late July](#). Emergency repairs reattached the top portion of the stone to its base.

Since then, an epoxy has held the rock together and metal police barriers have shielded it from further harm. Meanwhile, officials have been planning how to permanently restore the rock, preserve its historic value and safeguard it from future damage.

Pending approval from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the state plans to make final repairs to the sidewalk stone, move it away from the road by between 12 inches and 16 inches and install black-painted ornamental bollards to help guard it, officials said.

The state will contract sculpture and monument conservator, Daedalus, Inc., to

aid in the effort, which, including the temporary fix made last summer, is expected to cost a total of \$4,000, Verseckes said.

The crack in the stone will be filled with a repair mortar customized to match the slate marker's color and texture, according to a proposal detailed in a letter seeking the state historical commission's approval. Graffiti and gum on the stone will be removed using organic solvents.

If the emergency repairs are deemed inadequate, the couple-hundred pound stone will be removed and taken to Daedalus' studio in Watertown for more comprehensive repair that would include installing stainless steel pins and new epoxy to reconnect the two rock pieces, the letter said.

The project will involve removing the existing sidewalk panel and replacing it with new concrete that will be given an exposed aggregate surface finish "to provide a visual contrast" with the surrounding sidewalk, the letter said.

Some other stone mile markers in Massachusetts are surrounded by a wall or frame-like structure, and state officials said that the proposed project would not impact the Allstone stone's historic status.

The marker is part of a group of stones installed along a mail delivery system connecting the Hub and New York City.

Though some, like the Allston milestone, were installed before hand, the rocks became a standardized means of measuring distance between Springfield and Boston in 1767, when the Bay State was still an English colony. They were installed along the Upper Boston Post Road, which is now Route 20.

Each stone had a mileage figure carved into it to mark its distance from a stone near City Hall in downtown Boston. Over time, some of the rocks are believed to have been lost or moved because of factors including damage and development.

The stone in Allston "disappeared and was believed to be lost, but it was eventually found and reset," according to a copy of a historic survey report from 1941 that Charlie Vasiliades of the Brighton-Allston Historical Society e-mailed to Boston.com.

Carved into the stone in Allston is "1760" the year it was installed. Below that

Carved into the stone in Allston is 1729, the year it was installed. Below that marking, the initials "PD" are engraved. The letters stand for Judge Paul Dudley, who became Chief Justice of the Province of Massachusetts Bay in 1745. He installed some other mile markers around Boston.

Benjamin Franklin also planted some of the mile markers in Massachusetts.

All of the boulders, which vary in dimension and weight, were listed as a group in the National Register of Historic Places in the early 1970s after a law was passed the decade prior directing the state to restore and maintain the heavy, informative rocks.

Stones are known to have been located in: Cambridge, Watertown, Waltham, Weston, Wayland, Sudbury, Marlborough, Northborough, Shrewsbury, Worcester, Leicester, Spencer, East Brookfield, Brookfield, West Brookfield, Warren, Palmer, and Wilbraham.

The stones range in height from one to five feet; in width from 18 inches to three feet; and in depth from four inches to more than one foot.

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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