

# IDEA: JUST SAVE THE #@%!:) BRIDGE ALREADY!

## Honoring History

sounds like a eulogy.

This old bridge is history, it can be rehabilitated to keep doing its job: serving the people of Boston, resident and visitor. It doesn't need honor, just attention to its condition. The bridge construction is from a time when engineering required ingenuity instead of the brute force of modern materials. All that lacy steel crossbracing was put there to replace mass with creative spatial engineering. An experienced bridge engineer has reviewed the 2013 condition report, and insists the steel above deck level is reusable. Everyone acknowledges the deck and its structure have to be replaced. A modern lighter, stronger structural deck will reduce weight, allowing more loads to be carried more efficiently. Plans to move the bridge will almost guarantee it won't come back. Too much damage will be done in the dismantling of elements that otherwise could stay connected as they have been since 1937, the last rebuild. Restoring the bridge in place will require a temporary deck under, which will also serve to stabilize the bridge for safety. Time will be saved by restoration, instead of the several-year process of deciding on a new bridge and getting approvals. A renovation would not need the approval process that a replacement would need. It's ecologically beneficial to reuse the upper steel framework, and restoring it in place assures that the dollars spent on the bridge stay in the local economy. (And what would be wrong with reproducing it if it can't be restored?)

## Create a Destination

More like let a destination survive.

The bridge is a place already: a unique experience in the continuity of Boston's streets. Passing through the trusses before it was closed to pedestrians took me out of the day-to-day half-awareness of my surroundings, into a delightful world of semi-enclosed space, just above the water. Crazy patterns emerged and transformed as walking continually changed my perspective. It was satisfying on so many levels: feelings of enclosure and progression through the structural bays, the attractive danger of the water so near, people's engineering ingenuity, the built-ness of all the individual pieces riveted together in geometric patterns. And it's a long experience! It could take a few minutes to pass through if you were heading somewhere else. It was an experience of emotional, aesthetic and intellectual engagement for me.



From the water It is an icon in the cityscape: a long framework. Its 640 feet of 20' bays is recognizable from a distance as a clear geometry, made dramatic by the rising trusses in the center over the stone turntable. So it's a place already, and was a destination for photographers and artists, a back-drop for wedding party photos, and a delight for tourists who stumbled across it on the way to nearby destinations. It can be redeveloped to be a destination of its own, more of a park than a passage, a gift from the City to residents and visitors as other parks are, but absolutely unique: an engineering marvel, harbor view platform, and all the while providing passage through the City. It's wide enough to accommodate walkers and bicyclists, and still leave room for places to stop and enjoy the setting: three-season tents for a beer garden and café, staging ground for a historic harbor workboat museum, longboat rowing center, and the working bridge itself as a maritime artifact that used to allow shipping to pass up Fort Point Channel. Think of classic car exhibits, children's games, pushcarts. The bridge could open on demand, when the tide happens to be high, for harbor ferries (if that service ever gets on the water), and for water taxis. It could open on a regular schedule during the day, as an event that people would want to experience. It's a spectacular sight to see 340 feet of steel latticework swing slowly across the cityscape. (New mechanisms would significantly reduce the 12 minutes it takes now to open and close it.) Insurance could be negotiated to allow people to ride the bridge as it swings. A public-private partnership could raise revenue by renting commercial space and fund-raising from local developments, to support the operation of the bridge.

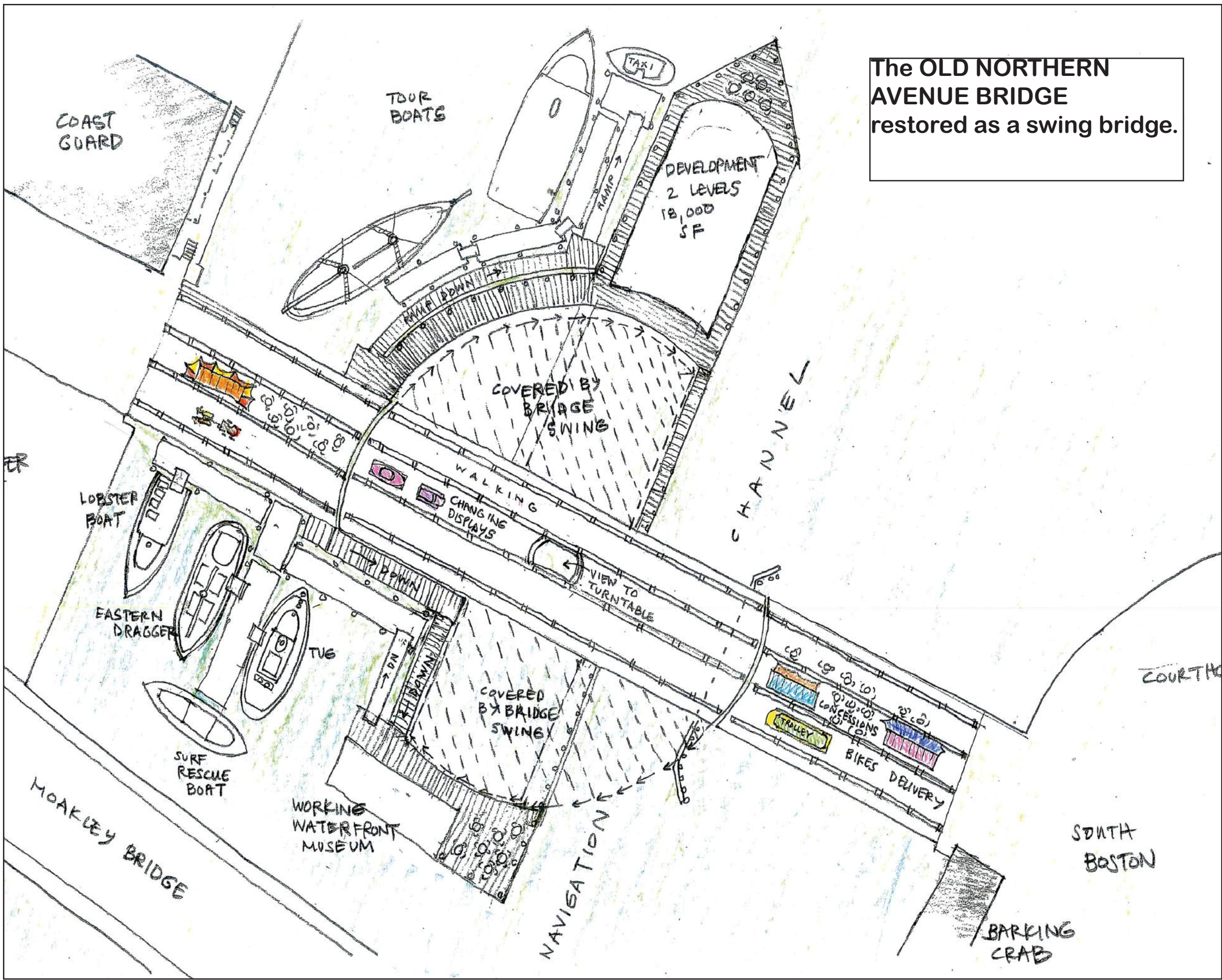
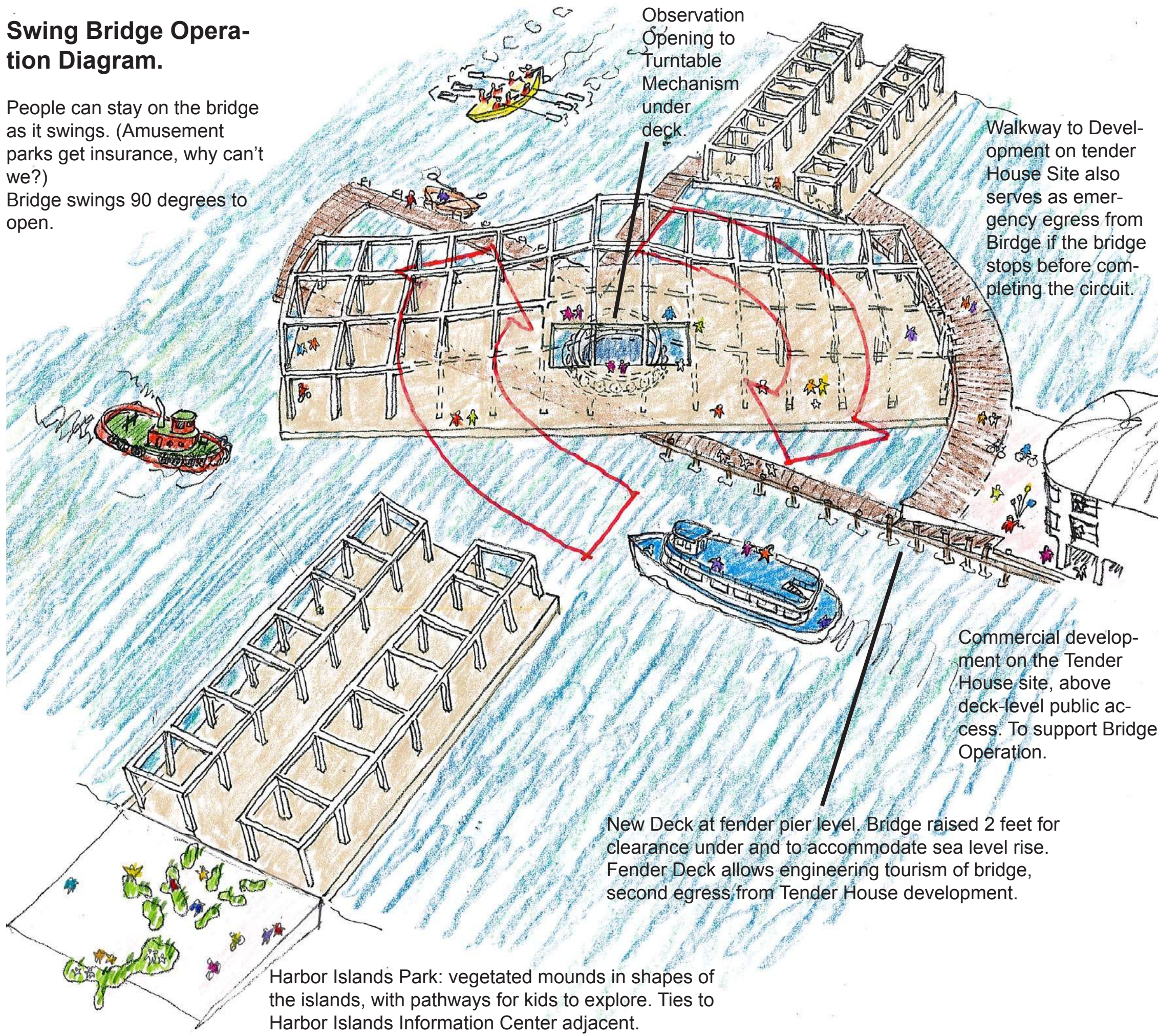
## Improve Mobility

but don't surrender to the automobile.

Boston is famously a walking city, and becoming a biking city as well. There is a loud clamor from some that the Northern Avenue crossing do something to alleviate traffic jams. The particular location of the bridge, feeding into the same road network as the Moakley Bridge beside it, means that putting cars on the Northern Avenue crossing (however configured) will lead to the same traffic jam on Atlantic Avenue. The future of Boston is people moving back to the City, less car use, more walking, biking and improved public transportation. Restoring the Old Northern Avenue Bridge will provide a generous path that can accommodate speed walkers late for work, different biking speeds, and leisurely strollers all at once, and in a setting with no fear of being hit by a car. Introducing cars on the bridge won't help traffic, and will significantly degrade the experience and practicality of the path. Let this vestige of the past serve and herald transportation's future, not continue the ills of the present.

## Swing Bridge Operation Diagram.

People can stay on the bridge as it swings. (Amusement parks get insurance, why can't we?) Bridge swings 90 degrees to open.



IF maintaining the Navigation Channel is a given. AND the cost of Bridge Tenders is an obstacle to saving the Bridge. THEN the Bridge has to lift the path over the Navigation Channel. WHO LOSES? Everyone but the boats.

- Vehicle traffic, which should only be confined to emergency vehicles during emergencies. The Moakley Bridge is only a few hundred feet away.
- Pedestrians and bikers, who would prefer a level crossing.

Is this a compromise that could be accepted to save the Old Northern Avenue Bridge?

