

By thinnest of margins, Green Line went astray

T officials had multiple warnings tracks on extension were too narrow

By Taylor Dolven, Laura Crimaldi, and Sean P. Murphy  
GLOBE STAFF

A big test for the Green Line extension tracks came on an unseasonably warm fall day in October 2021. Stations along the routes to Union Square and Medford were still being built, lighting was missing, and passengers wouldn't start riding trains there for several months.

The test took the form of a machine loaded onto the brand-new tracks. It would, among other things, scan and measure the width between the

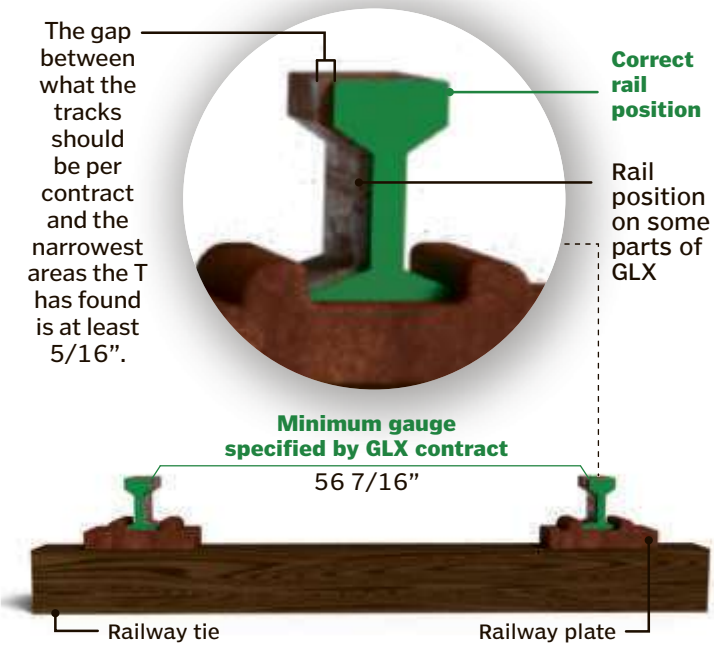
rails and flag any areas that were too narrow.

The results were startling. Nearly 400 sections of new track examined by the machine between the Science Park and Union Square and East Somerville stations were narrower than the contract specifications, according to a copy of the scan report obtained by the Globe.

Experts say it should have been a high-decibel warning that the MBTA's first attempt at expanding its subway system since the 1980s, a \$2.3 billion project that took decades

**TRACKS, Page A8**

5/16" was all it took to knock the MBTA's brand-new Green Line extension off track



Globe photographers share the stories behind their unforgettable images of 2023 in the **Globe Magazine**.

The crisis of homelessness is also felt by those who advocate for families without shelter, writes Yvonne Abraham. **Metro, B1.**

It took a team and the original drawings to turn back the clock on this crumbling Victorian. **Address, H1.**

Sprinkle bells

**Sunday:** Cloudy, drizzly. High: 42-47. Low: 39-44.  
**Monday:** Mostly cloudy. High: 47-52. Low: 38-43  
Complete report, **A22.**  
Deaths, **A15-19.**

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A painkiller without the threat of addiction

By Jonathan Saltzman  
GLOBE STAFF

The biggest day for Vertex Pharmaceuticals' stock in the last month wasn't when it won approval of a revolutionary treatment for sickle cell disease — it came five days later.

That's when Vertex reported encouraging results from a clinical trial of an experimental pain pill and its shares soared 13 percent, catapulting the market value of the Boston biotech past \$100 billion.

The rally was based on the promise — maybe the dream — of a new class of painkillers that would provide the relief of opioids without the addiction and deliver another blockbuster drug for Vertex and its shareholders. More than 131 million opioid prescriptions were filled

**PAIN, Page A7**

BEYOND THE GILDED GATE

A BOSTON BUILDING, SCATTERED SOULS, AND RENT CONTROL REVISITED



JONATHAN WIGGS /GLOBE STAFF

The former Hotel Hemenway, now called the Parkside, in the Fenway. Holly Bartel (left, in her Hemenway apartment in the early 1990s, and right in her current Vermont home) moved out of the building after rent control ended.



PROVIDED BY HOLLY BARTEL



JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

The end of rent control three decades ago helped push many working people out of a Fenway apartment building — and out of Boston. Their stories speak to one of the causes of the current housing crisis, and to the increasing demands that rent caps return.

This series was reported by Rebecca Ostriker, Mark Arsenault, Stephanie Ebbert, Andrew Brinker, and Diti Kohli, and edited by Patricia Wen and Tim Logan. Today's story was written by Arsenault and Ostriker.



Nearly 30 years ago, Holly Bartel gazed up at the antique brass ceiling lamp in one of the best apartments she'd ever had in Boston, and thought: Yeah, I'm taking that.

"I borrowed a ladder and I freed it," Bartel said recently of her sentimental theft, long after any statute of limitations had expired.

Over the past three decades, she has carried

the lamp like a talisman to every place she's lived. It is mounted today in her little house in Bellows Falls, Vt., where she moved for a lower cost of living.

The keepsake from her old apartment building, then known as Hotel Hemenway, is a reminder of an exciting time in her life, when people like her, who did not make much money, could afford an apartment in Boston, right in the thrumming heart of city life.

That was before the state voted in 1994 to abolish rent control, and sharply rising rental costs forced Bartel and dozens like her out of her beloved building in the Fenway neighborhood, and ultimately out of Boston. Back then, Bartel paid

**RENT CONTROL, Page A12**

Amid noise and chaos, a reliable respite in art



ALLY RZESA/GLOBE STAFF

By Francie Lin  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Among the harder things about life post-pandemic is simply that we're compelled to go on — lucky and grateful, yes, but also tired, uncertain, often sad without clear reason.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

That huge convulsion of civic life punctuated by rage, violence, ugly partisanship, and death isn't something that will just disappear with vaccination.

In the best of circumstances,

emerging from such a period of anxiety and distrust with a full heart would require years of thoughtful repair. And at the end of a year wracked by shootings, war, climate disaster, and more war, the current moment is decidedly not the best of circumstances.

But inner survival in times of darkness is a human art. It is, in fact, art — and music. And movies, TV. Books.

In a world that grows increasingly dark and dissected, the ability to slip free of its grim

**THE ARTS, Page A11**

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