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the ‘T’ Line: where in Davis sq. will the train travel through?

by Stephen Strahs

"Somerville is on the track" — that is, the MBTA Red Line through Davis square, expected to run from Harvard square up to Arlington Heights, including stop-off points in Porter and Davis squares, Alewife Brook Parkway and Arlington Center.

That's the word from Gary Groat, Davis square project director for the national consulting firm of DeLeuw, Cather and Company, hired by the MBTA for preliminary design and community consensus work for the planned nine-mile extension of the Red line up through the northwest area of greater Boston.

For numerous technical studies reams of official documents and endless discussion over the course of years, it looks as if Somerville will get the subway stop it has fought for and now awaits. The waiting, however, will continue for some time, probably into the 1980's.

Construction could begin within two to three years, however it will probably be longer than that, says Groat, before Somerville sees holes being bored through Davis square for a subway platform.

The major question that now seems all but resolved is the actual location of the station within the Davis square area. Ward Six Civic Association members, area business people and residents, the Chamber of Commerce and the City's Transit Advisory Board have been meeting regularly with the MBTA consulting team.

The decision, which is subject to final approval from Washington, appears to be in favor of the alternative to the original Davis square site at Holland street proposed in a study over a year ago. A third site considered is Cutter square (where Summer and Elm streets merge near the Ming Toy restaurant), just southeast of Davis square. It appears the least likely of the three choices after last Wednesday's community meeting attended by the consultants.

"We're over the hump in terms of time," declares Groat, despite the heavy work yet to be done, including the further ironing out of problems involving station location and submission of a detailed environmental description to the Federal government requiring their approval and comprehensive planning, engineering and design.

"We're now at the preliminary design stage," Groat says.

The MBTA consultant is gearing his effort to completion of the environmental statement in time for a public hearing in Somerville this summer. The hearing, required by Federal law, will signal the next step in the project, the refinement of plans for the particular subway site selected.

The B2 option

Until last week's meeting, the choice was between the Holland street location and Cutter square. However, Groat at that time unveiled a third option, referred to as B2, which he said would couple the advantages of the Davis square commercial area with the elimination of a number of the drawbacks of the original Holland street proposal.

The new proposal, considered the most likely to go through, would shift the station from the original Holland street site northeast to where the present Boston and Maine Railroad tracks meet Davis square at College avenue. The consultants contend it would take less land for the station and that fewer businesses and residences would be displaced to make way for the underground rails. The new alternative also includes a bus-loading area directly above the subway, which should ease traffic problems resulting from subway commuter traffic.

According to the consultants, the B2 location is superior to the others because it would result in the least long-term change in the appearance of the Square, while allowing more area to be reserved for small pedestrian parks near the station. According to statistics provided by the consultants, property valued by the City at about $115,000 would be displaced, while the original Holland street site would require using $253,000 worth of assessed property for the subway. Cutter square falls in the middle in that category, with a property valuation figure of $192,000.

Frank Sostito, City Planning Board Director and the Mayor's official representative to the meeting, voiced support of the B2 site, as did Frank M. Stellato, executive director of the Somerville...
MEET SAM REECE

The City and MAPC have hired Mrs. Joyce “Sam” Reece to work full time with the Davis Square Task Force.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

The opposite page is a questionnaire - for you to give your opinion on some questions about Davis Square and its future. Please take the time to read the questions carefully and formulate your ideas before answering. The Task Force needs your ideas. Simply fold the sheet and drop it in a mailbox - postage is prepaid.

Drop in and talk with Sam Reece. She's here to work for the community but she must know your concerns and ideas. Sam would like to hear from you.

Most of all, join the Task Force and help plan for the future of the area. Members meet regularly twice a month. Just contact Sam Reece at 625-3813. She'll make sure you're put on the mailing list.

TASK FORCE MEETING SCHEDULE

DATES: 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: Branch Library - Basement Room
        College Avenue
        Davis Square

(Watch the "Community Calendar" in the Somerville Journal)

Her job is to get to know the feelings of the Davis Square community - residents and business people alike - to help the Task Force develop plans for the future of the area, and find the means for carrying them out. She can be reached at 625-3813. She will be at 58 Day Street, Room 328, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Sam is a professional urban planner and a recent graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Design. She has had executive experience in private business as well as public planning experience. Drop in and chat with her.

Prepared by:
   The Metropolitan Area Planning Council
For, and with the advice of:
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This report made possible by a grant from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation.
NEXT STEPS

This fall the Task Force will continue its discussions of the long range future of the Square, the business district and the surrounding neighborhoods. We will work on such things as neighborhood stabilization, zoning, parking and specific improvements in the Square. But we also have to keep up with the MBTA's architects and engineers, who are hard at work designing the transit facilities. Part of our time will be spent advising the MBTA in the following two areas:

1. DESIGN OF THE TRANSIT FACILITIES

   The design of a transit station is a complex project. Many different problems have to be solved.

   Safety and security are among the highest priorities. The station must function well at all times and provide a minimum of "hidden spaces".

   It is difficult to walk through and across the Square because of the traffic. Station entryways should be placed in convenient locations for pedestrians in the Square. Businessmen feel that, because entryways can influence shopping patterns, they should be located so as to encourage shopping in the Square. The MBTA and the Task Force are discussing three possible sites for subway station entryways: a College Avenue entrance; a Holland Street entrance, a storefront entrance from Highland Avenue.

   Busways and landscaping are integral parts of the station design. Busways should be out of the main stream of traffic with safe and adequate loading and unloading facilities near the station. The proposed busway location is on the railroad right-of-way between Grove Street and the station.

   Landscaping should beautify the Square without obstructing traffic or the driver's vision. The area where the railroad presently runs through the Square could become a small park, with landscaping and attractive sitting areas. This park could do much to upgrade the appearance of the Square.

   Buildings could be built over the right-of-way at either end of the station, which would affect the design of the station. They could contain commercial or residential space or both. Some people think this might improve the "definition" of the Square. Others think the Square is already "closed in" and needs the open spaces or vistas that the right-of-way provides. The Task Force will try to decide soon whether any buildings are desired in these locations, since the station designers need this information in the next few months.

2. REUSE OF THE BOSTON AND MAINE RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY

   The MBTA is in the process of purchasing the B&M right-of-way which runs through Davis Square. Rail freight service in the vicinity will be discontinued, the subway station and tunnel will be underground. The land currently used for the railroad will become available for other purposes.

   *The section from Grove Street east to, perhaps, Cedar Street will become available for new uses, but the length of this section is not yet determined.

   - The right-of-way from Holland Street west to the Cambridge line will definitely be available for reuse. After the subway tunnel is constructed and covered over, the land will be able to hold all but large buildings with no additional foundation supports required. This section of right-of-way is approximately 80 feet wide and 1/4 mile long.

   Several possible uses for it are being considered by the Task Force, including:

   o Development of additional surface parking for shoppers and employees.

   o Development of an outdoor recreational area with trees, bikeways, tennis courts, and other recreational facilities.

   o Construction of a community center building for groups and residents of all ages.

   The Task Force will be concerned both with meeting the needs of the community at large and with making the new uses as compatible as possible with the immediate abutters along the right-of-way.

   ![The railroad right-of-way outside Davis Square.](image)

   A Community Center with a linear park in the railroad right-of-way could become a center for civic activities.
THE FUTURE OF THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

Business and service operations in Davis Square are numerous. Walking or driving into the Square, one is immediately struck by the variety of storefronts and signs within a relatively small area. It is an area with a lot of problems, and a lot of potential.

A busy afternoon in the Square's business district.

The Task Force has discussed the business district and its future potential on several occasions. It seems clear that even with the subway Davis Square will never become a major regional shopping center. But the Square could once again become a thriving and pleasant business district for the surrounding neighborhoods. The future of the business district depends upon many factors: the attitudes and actions of local businessmen, actions taken by the City, and local and regional economic trends.

The question of the need for new or different commercial activity in the Square was raised by the Task Force. Are the existing stores and businesses actually serving the needs of residents or are other kinds of businesses or retail outlets necessary? A market study, funded by UMTA and the MBTA, has been initiated by MAPC to study the market forces and development potential around the proposed Red Line Extension stations. By the end of October, the Task Force will have some preliminary results from the marketing consultants which will help answer these questions.

All smaller commercial centers today are competing with suburban shopping malls and plazas. In the Boston metropolitan area the older cities must also compete with downtown Boston. Efforts have been made by many smaller cities to capitalize on their existing central business districts through revitalization and rehabilitation programs. These programs have proved successful in many instances by making downtowns more attractive to shoppers and new merchants.

Davis Square has potential. All of the structures in the Square are of a similar scale and size; they blend in with the surrounding residential neighborhoods. But this aspect of the Square is hidden by large signs, advertisements and uncoordinated storefronts, and dirt and litter on the streets and sidewalks. The Square could use a "Face Lift".

The Task Force has discussed many techniques which would help to revitalize the business district. Some of these are:

COMMON THEME FOR THE SQUARE: Develop a common theme among stores, such as Lexington Center.

AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENTS: Streets and sidewalks are littered and dirty; street lighting is inadequate in part of the Square.

PARKING IMPROVEMENTS: Develop additional or improve existing parking for employees and shoppers.

NEW MARKETING TECHNIQUES: Businessmen may need to adapt to a new set of market opportunities due to new mix of shoppers in the Square.

ANCHOR STORE: Attract an "anchor store" - one which would bring more business to other shops.

PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS: Improve pedestrian crossings in the Square.

SIGN CONTROL: Uniform style and size of signs would improve Square's image.

MASTER PLAN: A plan for the future, backed by the business and residential communities and the City, would increase the confidence of banks and other investors.

AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENTS

Aesthetic problems in Davis Square are obvious - the streets and sidewalks are littered and dirty; street lighting in some parts of the Square is inadequate; and there are no attractive areas within the Square to rest or relax. Many simple things could be done at relatively small cost to make the Square more attractive: clean streets and sidewalks regularly; collect rubbish more frequently from businesses; place public trash containers throughout the Square; group street benches and plantings in vacant lots or on sidewalks to create resting places or small urban parks.

PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

Task Force members complain of the difficulty of walking through the Square because of the traffic congestion. The concept of a pedestrian mall on Elm Street has been suggested, but seems to be impractical; no alternative way has been found to handle the large volume of traffic. The idea of eliminating street parking and widening sidewalks was suggested as an improvement for pedestrians. This approach will be looked into in detail.
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Recreational facilities in the Davis Square area are few, and many residents feel a need for more active and passive recreational areas such as parks, tennis courts, walking trails, sitting areas, etc. A Community Center, for many age groups, has also been suggested. Task Force members feel the residents need a place, similar to the Community Center in East Somerville, for meetings and for holding civic events. These suggested recreational uses are still in the discussion phases. In the next few months Task Force members will be analyzing in more detail the need and demand for recreational facilities in the Davis Square area. With the railroad right-of-way becoming available for new uses, Task Force members are discussing what the best options for its use are. Many members feel that the Square is too densely developed and that the right-of-way should be preserved for a park area with bike and pedestrian paths, tennis courts, and other recreational opportunities. Other members see this land as an opportunity for more parking space. There is not necessarily any conflict; parking in the Davis Square end of the right-of-way could be attractively landscaped and compatible with recreational uses toward the Cambridge end.

Kenney Playground under improvement.

Children playing in an urban 'tot lot'.

Small parks can be developed offering green spaces in an urban environment for relaxing, talking, biking or walking.
THE FUTURE OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS

A major topic of discussion of the Task Force is the possibility that the population of the neighborhoods may change once the 'T' is in operation. Census figures for 1960 and 1970 indicate that the Davis Square area is already experiencing some population changes: young working people are living in Davis Square in increasing numbers, the number of families is decreasing, and the number of children born to Davis Square residents is also decreasing. These changes in population may not, as yet, be significant, but they seem to indicate the beginning of a new population trend. Improved access to employment and the universities could intensify this trend.

An influx of new households could change the Square, bringing new demands for services, new stores, and entertainment. Population changes could create opportunities for expanded or different businesses in the Square, and could be a real "shot in the arm" for the Davis Square business community.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

The subway may create a demand for new housing types. This could mean subdivision of existing houses or new construction. Many Task Force members are set against large scale housing construction, especially high-rise. Some feel the Square can accommodate new housing and that it would be beneficial to the area and the City's tax base. The Task Force has not reached a consensus on this issue. The results of a Market Study being conducted by MAPC will clarify the extent of the housing demand in Davis Square over the next ten years.

Two issues which have been raised are the zoning of College Avenue, which is presently not included in the height limitation district, and the design review of any proposed large housing development. These issues will be examined in more detail at future meetings.

PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

Many people feel that there is inadequate parking in the Square. Most of the parallel parking spaces on the streets are filled all day by employees in stores or offices, leaving fewer parking choices for shoppers and others driving to the Square. A parking space inventory and a study of parking needs are being conducted by the Task Force staff. Once the need for additional parking is established, the Task Force can be more confident about identifying future potential parking sites. In addition to the railroad right-of-way, parking options such as vacant or unused lots are being examined. It is agreed by members that parking areas with all day parking should be developed for employees within a reasonable distance of stores and offices, so that spaces along the commercial streets will be available to shoppers and others.

A typical residential street in the Davis Square area.

On the other hand, many Task Force members are concerned about changes in their environment. They like the character of the neighborhoods and the commitment of the residents to maintaining a stable residential environment. Instances of absentee landlords and subdividing of single-family homes to apartments are not new to the area, but are becoming more frequent. Some fear a transient population who might have less interest in or commitment to the community. A new population could bring problems as well as opportunities — problems of traffic and parking on residential streets, problems of noise, perhaps a decline in the upkeep of housing.

The Task Force is attempting to determine measures to control these possible population changes and their effects. The group would like to encourage and maintain the diversity of population which exists in the area today. And the members are trying to define a balance between the interests of the business community and those of the residents.

Street parking is convenient but...
LAND USE PLANNING - WHAT IS IT?

"Land use" is a planner's term for the kinds of issues involved in the Davis Square effort. What effect will the subway have on the surrounding area? What types of development are desirable, or undesirable? What patterns of residential and business activities would benefit the area as a whole? These are "land use" questions. How is the land used? How would we like to see it used in the future?

One of the goals of the Davis Square Task Force is to develop a "land use plan" for the area. This plan will define what the community wants the area to be like in the future. It might designate areas for commercial activity, residential areas, parks and recreation, parking areas, etc. Much of this would be the same as the present; some would be new (for example, the use of the railroad right-of-way areas).

Stating the plan does not make it happen, but a plan which gains the support of the community - residential and business - and the City, becomes an important guide for future development decisions. It tells developers and investors what types of new development are and are not acceptable. And many aspects of the plan would be incorporated into the zoning ordinance, which sets legal limits on all new development.

As a first step toward developing such a plan, the Task Force has attempted in recent meetings to understand how the Square presently functions, how the neighborhoods relate to the business district and vice versa, how certain needs of the community are met or not met, and how the new transit facility will effect these interrelationships. This report attempts to summarize what we have found so far and some of the many questions which remain to be answered.
WHO IS WORKING FOR DAVIS SQUARE?

THE DAVIS SQUARE TASK FORCE

The Davis Square Task Force is a diverse group of individuals who are concerned about the future of Davis Square. It includes representatives from the Ward Six Civic Association, the Davis Square Businessmen’s Association, the Somerville Chamber of Commerce, the City of Somerville, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and interested citizens. The Task Force functions as an advisory body to the City and the MBTA.

The Ward Six Civic Association is a group of homeowners and tenants who live in neighborhoods around the Square. Active since 1970, the Association recently achieved a re-zoning of the Davis Square business district to preserve the low-rise character of the Square. The Davis Square Businessmen’s Association and the Somerville Chamber of Commerce represent the interests of the Square’s business community. While the residents and the businessmen do not agree on all issues, they have a growing interest in working together for the common good of the whole Davis Square area. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council is the regional planning agency for the greater Boston area. It is assisting the Task Force and the City in planning for the future of the Davis Square area.

Members listen to consultant’s presentation.

The Task Force was first organized to help the MBTA determine the design and location of the subway tunnel and station. During the past three years, the Task Force has discussed many aspects of the transit project and advised the MBTA of their concerns and suggestions.

Now that the original task of locating the transit station is completed, the Task Force is advising the MBTA on the more detailed design of the station and tunnel including the location of entrances and busways and the landscaping of the facilities.

The other job of the Task Force is to study the potential effects of the transit line on the Davis Square neighborhoods and business district, and work with the City to plan for the future of the area.

Alderman Gene Brune at a recent Task Force Meeting.

An animated discussion.

Since 1975, members have met twice a month to discuss these issues. This fall, the Task Force will continue this work and will also work on two major questions which must be answered for the MBTA: the design of the transit station and the future use of the railroad right-of-way. Many of the issues they will be attempting to resolve are summarized in the following pages.
HOW DAVIS SQUARE GOT A SUBWAY

The proposal to extend the Red Line out from Harvard Square was originally made in response to Governor Sargent's decision that there be no more highways built within Route 128. This decision effectively blocked the construction of the inner belt and the Route 2 extension which, if built, would have impacted residents of Somerville. Mayor Ralph asked the Governor's Boston Transportation Planning Review to look at the possibility of including a stop at Davis Square. In 1975, a report on the concept of extending the Red Line through Davis Square to Arlington Heights was published. After further review the proposal was adopted by the MBTA.

A citizens group called the Davis Square Task Force was formed to advise the 'T' in defining the project. Together with the Mayor this group insisted that there be no commuter parking garage. They felt that the street network could not handle any more traffic. The MBTA agreed to this condition.

Originally there were two proposed sites for the station in the Davis Square area, one in Cutter Square and one just west of Davis Square near Holland and Buena Vista Streets. After several months of study and discussion with the MBTA's engineers, the Task Force concluded that the best location would be in Davis Square itself, underneath the railroad right-of-way. This location required only 6 property takings as opposed to approximately 21 and 54 for the two original alternatives. It was also felt that Cutter Square was too close to the Porter Square station, and that the Davis Square site would be most accessible to the whole shopping area and the surrounding neighborhoods. The MBTA and its consultants agreed, and decided on the current proposed location.

MBTA officials have recently applied to the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) for funding of the subway extension. Total Federal Funds requested for the Red Line from Harvard Square to Arlington Heights are estimated at $309 million. Construction of the Davis Square station is expected to cost $7.8 million.

Before construction can begin on the 'T' extension additional engineering and design work must be completed for tunnels and stations. A $3 million capital grant has been approved by UMTA for additional engineering studies on the subway extension. Construction is expected to begin in two years and the subway should be in service by 1982. That's not so far away!
November 9, 1976

Dear Friend,

THE SUBWAY IS COMING...........

It's been talked about for half a century. Now, at last, it's about to happen. The MBTA is conducting the engineering work for an extension of the "Red Line" from Harvard Square, and one of the stops will be at Davis Square. Other stops are planned for Porter Square, the Alewife area in Cambridge, Arlington Center and Arlington Heights. The line and stations in Somerville and Cambridge will be totally underground. Service is expected to begin around 1982.

With the coming of the 'T', it will be easier for people to get to and from Davis Square. The trip to Boston and other centers will be quicker and easier. The railroad will no longer cross through the center of the Square, and the railroad right-of-way may be put to some other use. The station area can be landscaped to be an attractive addition to the Square. Thus the new facilities will bring both transit service and some immediate improvements to Davis Square.

The coming of rapid transit service also raises many questions about the long-range future of the Davis Square area. How will the business district be affected? How will the neighborhoods around the Square be affected? Will there be changes in traffic, parking, property values, population, shopping patterns?

A group of concerned residents and business people is working on these questions any many others. This group, the Davis Square Task Force, is working with the City, the MBTA and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to plan for the coming of the subway. We are working hard to solve any problems which may come with rapid transit service, and we are finding that there are exciting opportunities to improve the Square and bring back the attractiveness and vitality it once had.

This first Community Report describes what is happening. The Davis Square Task Force feels it is important that you know what is at stake in your Square. But, beyond that, we hope that you will want to get involved. We need your participation to develop ideas and plans for the future of the Square. We need your support to carry them out.

So we ask you to read this report. Please help us by returning the enclosed questionnaire. And, if you can spend one or two evenings a month planning for the future of Davis Square, join us in the Davis Square Task Force.

Thank you.

For the Task Force,

Tom Pelham
President, Ward Six Civic Association

Alderman Eugene C. Bruno
Alderman, Ward Six

Dan Kallis
President, Davis Square Businessmen's Association

Frank A. Leitao
Planning Director, City of Somerville

Jack Partridge
Executive Director, Somerville Chamber of Commerce

Chief Planner, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Ward Six Civic Association
Davis Square Businessmen's Association
Somerville Chamber of Commerce
City of Somerville
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
GETTING READY FOR THE T

A REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY FROM THE DAVIS SQUARE TASK FORCE

November 1976
Construction at Davis Square

The Davis Square station may be the first of the four new and remodeled stations on the Red Line Extension-Northwest to be completed. According to John A. Carey, MBTA Project Manager-Construction, 95% of the work on the station has been done and all work by the station contractor, the Perini Corporation, should be finished by the summer. Richard Capello, Perini's Project Engineer, reports that workers will be busy between now and then installing elevators, escalators and railings and completing other finish work, including a final clean-up. The station is scheduled to open for use in late 1984, when all of the new stations out to Alewife are due to open.

Architects Goody, Clancy and Associates designed the Davis Square station. The two brick and glass headhouses at College Avenue and Holland Street in Somerville enclose escalators and stairways down to the mezzanine level of the station. The College Avenue entrance, a transfer point for bus passengers, also features an elevator for handicapped passengers and a concession stand. A skylight brightens the stairway at the Holland Street entrance.

A 300' long mezzanine runs between the two entrances, overlooking the outbound track and most of the passenger waiting area. In the middle of the mezzanine is the fare collection area, which leads to stairs, escalators and an elevator to the train platform below. The single level platform will serve both inbound and outbound trains and will be enlivened by another skylight. The open mezzanine, the skylights and the warm red brick of the interior walls and floors all contribute to the spaciousness that will characterize this station.

Construction of the transit station has spurred other improvements in Davis Square by the MBTA, the City of Somerville and local merchants.

Construction of the transit station has spurred other improvements in Davis Square. Benches, landscaping and sculpture have been planned for the brick plaza that the MBTA is building near the station entrances. To emphasize pedestrian retail activity, the City of Somerville will widen sidewalks, improve traffic signals and administer federal low-interest loans to merchants for fixing up their storefronts. With a new look and easier access, Davis Square will soon become a better community shopping area for its Somerville and Cambridge neighbors.
Arts On The Line: Davis Square

A little bit of the Davis Square community is immortalized in the new subway station; tiles made from drawings by students at the Powderhouse Community School in Somerville have been installed along the mezzanine wall as part of the Arts On The Line program. First to sixth graders drew pictures for artist Jack Gregory of Belfast Bay Tile Works in 1980. Gregory transferred 250 of the drawings to tiles, selected colors and invited the children to his Somerville studio to watch him make the tiles. Each tile bears the name of the child who designed it. The textured 8" tiles are grouped along the brick mezzanine wall at a height that will let both children and adults enjoy the art work.

Those who like to stare at their feet while waiting for the train may be startled and pleased to discover short poems underfoot. Eleven poems will be scattered around the brick floors, sandblasted in 2" high letters. The poems represent a range of styles, evoking moods through the sounds and meanings of their words. Some are straightforward, while others strive for more complicated responses of self-discovery and contemplation. The poets (most from Massachusetts) include Elizabeth Bishop, Emily Dickinson, Denise Levertov, Peter Payack and Walt Whitman.

From both the mezzanine and the train platform, passengers will be able to see a large abstract metal painting commissioned from artist Sam Gilliam of Washington, D.C. The 20' by 40' painting on metal will be mounted in sections on the wall next to the outbound train tracks so each panel can move separately in response to vibrations from trains, weather changes and other environmental effects.

Realism in art will be abundantly represented by the sculptures of Jamaica Plain resident James Tyler. Ten life-size figures cast in specially dyed concrete will lounge around the plaza that the MBTA is building in Davis Square. Local residents and merchants were models for the sculptures, so plaza users will have familiar faces for company.

Tiles made from drawings by students at the Powderhouse Community School have been installed along the mezzanine wall. Each tile bears the name of the child who designed it.
They’ll eyeball the Red Line

By Sean Murphy
Globe Correspondent

A group of about 80 Cambridge businessmen and residents last night formed a citizen’s group to study the ecological and economic impacts of the MBTA’s extension of the Red Line to Porter square.

The group includes about 25 businessmen, who operate restaurants and lounges, retail stores and various service-related businesses.

“We are absolutely not opposed to public mass transportation,” said Henry Shawah, a goldsmith whose business is on Massachusetts avenue. “But we are concerned that the construction could seriously affect our safety and the quality of life in the Massachusetts avenue area.”

Shawah said the group, which calls itself the Mass. Ave. Harvard-Porter Alert, will attempt to force the city of Cambridge to accept a more active role in overseeing the construction process and the MBTA to be more considerate to businesses and residents.

The federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration last November approved the construction of an underground tunnel which will eventually extend to Davis sq., Somerville and Alewife Brook parkway in Cambridge. The project, which will cost an estimated $440 million, is expected to be completed in 1983.

The Mass. Ave. Harvard-Porter Alert will hold meetings throughout July and begin its study in August, Shawah said.
Governor Dukakis also noted that construction of the Eliot temporary station will be the first piece of public construction in a major redevelopment of the 12-acre Bennett-Eliot Yards, a project he said will have "an exceptionally positive impact on both the environment and the economy of the Harvard Square area."

Development of the yard includes the new John F. Kennedy School of Government, currently under construction; a five-acre Kennedy Memorial Park fronting Charles River along Memorial Drive; and a $40 million private "mixed use" development project. A five-person committee of state and local officials is nearing selection of a private developer for that project.

Construction of the Eliot Station is scheduled for completion this Summer, which will allow work to begin on the Harvard Square Station. In addition to a new station below ground, the aboveground portion will be beautified, and more rational traffic pattern will be instituted.

The entire Red Line extension project to Alewife is scheduled for completion in late 1982.

The state has applied for federal money to extend the depressed Red Line further to Arlington Heights and is also studying options for public transportation beyond that to Route 128. UMTA has asked for more data on extending the line beyond Alewife.

From the Harvard Square Station, the Red Line will be in a deep bore tunnel under Massachusetts Avenue to Porter Square. The Porter Station will have bus access and facilities for passengers to transfer to and from the South Acton commuter rail line. The tunnel north from Porter will be deep bore to Davis Square in West Somerville. The extension west from Davis Square will be a cut and cover tunnel to a point just south and west of Dewey-Almy Circle on Alewife Brook Parkway. The Alewife Station will serve as a key regional transportation point with bus access.

(END - ADVANCE FOR RELEASE FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 1978 AT 9:30 A.M.)
ADVANCE FOR RELEASE FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 1978 AT 9:30 A.M.

DUKAKIS SIGNALS START
OF $440 MILLION EXTENSION
OF RED LINE TO NORTHWEST

ADVANCE FOR RELEASE FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 1978 AT 9:30 A.M.—BOSTON—

Operating a jackhammer and wearing OSHA-regulation earmuffs, Governor Michael S. Dukakis this morning broke ground for the Red Line's new Eliot Station, signalling the start of the MBTA's $440 million extension from Harvard Square to Alewife Brook Parkway.

At the ceremony, the Governor said the extension from Harvard Square to Alewife Brook Parkway "is a major step in our goal to provide first rate public transportation to as much of the public as possible," and will also contribute "immeasurably" to the economic health and vitality of the area.

He participated in groundbreaking ceremonies at the former MBTA Bennett-Eliot storage yards near Harvard Square, where construction is beginning for the temporary Eliot MBTA station which will be used for passenger service to Cambridge while a new $48 million Harvard Square Station is being built.

Also participating in the groundbreaking ceremonies were MBTA Chairman Robert R. Kiley, master of ceremonies; Board Members Guido R. Perera, Jr., and Mrs. Claire R. Barrett, and Transportation Secretary Frederick P. Salvucci.

When the Northwest Extension is completed, it will be underground from the new Harvard Square Station 2.7 miles to Alewife at Routes 2 and 16 at the Cambridge-Belmont-Arlington boundaries. A major transportation station will be built at Alewife, including a 2,000-car garage. There will also be intermediate stations at Porter Square in North Cambridge and Davis Square in West Somerville.

The Federal government is financing 80 percent of the project.

The Federal Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) has allocated $42 million for the first year of construction.

The Governor said the transportation project will provide "an impressive list of benefits for the entire area," including the creation of more than 11,000 construction jobs.

"Residents of North Cambridge and Somerville will have convenient, quick access to Harvard Square and downtown Boston without further congestion of overcrowded streets. Industrial development northwest of Cambridge will be spurred by close proximity to a major transportation line. And Harvard Square, already an important business district, will be enhanced immeasurably by a handsome new MBTA station that will serve as a sort of economic magnet," the Governor said.

—More—
Other Informational Activities

Other informational and advisory activities included the representation of city officials on the Red Line Working Committee, an ongoing participatory group which is advising the MBTA and the Consultant on total project or regional issues. Frequent presentations have been made to Cambridge organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee. A model of the proposed Porter Square Station was prepared and used in a presentation by the Consultant at a May 10, 1975 Community Street Fair sponsored by the North Avenue Congregational Church in Porter Square.

A project library for the Red Line Extension has been established at the Central Library, 440 Broadway. It contains all relevant studies and reports to provide interested citizens with background information and data on the project. Citizens may submit comments or questions concerning the project on pre-addressed and stamped cards available at the project library.

Issues

Many issues and concerns were identified based on the review of existing city policy statements, media coverage of previous Red Line Extension proposals, transcripts of relevant public hearings, interviews and community meetings. These issues generally fell into two categories—those which apply to the City as a whole and those which are relevant for individual station areas. The major citywide issue concerning all station areas is the desire for the Red Line Extension to continue to Route 128. Those issues relevant to a particular station area are discussed below.

Harvard Square

- Study alternatives A-(I), D, G and no-build.
- Previous alternatives C, E, F and H be dropped from further consideration.
- Compatibility with the Harvard Square Comprehensive Policy Plan.
- Levels of structural and property displacement.
- Potential building settlements or noise-vibration effects.
A land use subcommittee was formed as a part of the Porter Square TAG to provide continuity between the station location, planning and environmental assessment activities and the detailed land use studies to be undertaken following project approval. At an organizational meeting held on April 29, 1975, a small steering committee was established to direct future land use study efforts, thereby affording continuous citizen input to that phase.


Alewife Task Force

The Alewife Task Force was established by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The group was comprised of representatives from more than 40 different interest groups. This group met either weekly or biweekly beginning in March 1975 to formulate a general community policy statement on an alignment and on the station and garage location. Additionally, the Alewife Task Force discussed other issues and topics related to station development such as future land use, preservation of open space, and highway improvements. In organizing the Alewife Task Force, an attempt was made to encourage maximum participation by all State, regional and local agencies, groups, or organizations—both public and private—with an interest in the Alewife station. Consequently, many of its members were representatives of such State and local agencies as the Central Transportation Planning Staff, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Metropolitan District Commission, and the Planning and Engineering Departments of Belmont, Cambridge and Arlington. The business community and local conservation and environmental groups were also well represented.

Two subcommittees were established to deal with land use and the concept of an Alewife linear park. These subcommittees met aside from the regular Task Force meetings to develop policies for submission to the entire Alewife Task Force for review and endorsement. Two specific subcommittee products were: 1) two general development plans for future land use in Alewife; and 2) a conceptual open space or linear park plan for Alewife. Several proposals and recommendations, made by these subcommittees and endorsed by the Alewife Task Force, are included in this report.
of the community to formulate opinions on the alternative lines. The brochure was distributed to those groups and individuals who participated in the meetings as well as to the community at large. Each brochure contained a form which could be torn out and returned with comments.

A final public meeting was held two weeks after the informational brochure was distributed. At this meeting a full presentation was made covering all alternatives studied. The various groups were asked to submit their positions on the alternatives. The comments were assembled and given to the City and the MBTA for review prior to reaching an agreement on a preferred alignment.

Porter Square Transportation Advisory Group

The Porter Square Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) was formed by the City of Cambridge in January 1975. An extensive mailing was undertaken to encourage participation by representatives of neighborhood, business and civic organizations as well as interested City departments, commissions and individual City Council members. Five TAG meetings were held, beginning on January 30, 1975. Each meeting was advertised in the news media and was open to the public. Discussions focused on clarifying issues involved in the location and design of the Red Line Extension from Harvard Square to Porter Square including the proposed Porter Square Station. Numerous informal meetings were initiated to further increase the productiveness of each formal meeting. No key decisions affecting the proposed station were made without consultation with the principal TAG representatives.

Following review, examination, and discussion of alternative station locations, the TAG reached a consensus that Station B.4 (revised) was the best scheme for Porter Square. When it was concluded that the taking of private property would be unavoidable, property owners and potentially displaced business persons were personally invited to attend the TAG meetings to discuss the project with other affected or interested persons and to consider options available for relocation. An MBTA relocation specialist held a special briefing at the third TAG meeting, March 20, 1975, to outline available relocation assistance.
The first workshops were conducted with community groups, businessmen, governmental agencies, Harvard University and others. These meetings were held to explain the study process, and to solicit comments on previous studies and on general areas of concern from members of the community. These first meetings set up the channels of communication between the MBTA, the Consultant and the community which were utilized throughout the study.

Contact with the community continued during the evaluation of alternatives. Meetings were arranged when certain aspects of an alternative appeared to have a significant effect on a particular segment of the community.

A second series of workshops and informational meetings was conducted after a set of station and alignment alternatives was developed. These sessions were arranged with groups and individuals previously consulted as well as with others who had not participated in the first meetings. At each meeting the participants were asked to respond to the alternatives proposed. If questions were raised which could not be satisfactorily answered at that time, another meeting was scheduled. Comments were recorded in memoranda prepared after each meeting.

Although the small workshops proved to be an excellent method of promoting community participation, citizens who did not belong to a formally organized community group were often excluded from this process. Therefore, several large-scale public forums were conducted. The Cambridge Transportation Forum sponsored an evening meeting at which the Consultant gave a presentation on the project and solicited comments from the audience. Also, a three-hour walk-in session was held at the Brattle Theatre on a weekday afternoon. This session was set up to encourage participation by those unable to attend evening meetings. The Brattle Theatre session included the showing of films which examined the building of London's Victoria Line subway. The films were also shown at a meeting one evening at the Cambridge Adult Education Center. All public forums and film showings were publicized in newspapers and on a local radio station. Area businessmen were notified of the Brattle Theatre session by letter.

An informational brochure summarizing the proposed alternatives and associated impacts was published. The brochure was not meant to be a detailed examination of the alternatives but, in conjunction with the public meetings, it provided a basis for members of
Chapter V

MUNICIPAL CONSIDERATIONS

An in-depth community liaison program was established to advise the MBTA and the Consultant on the local municipal considerations affecting the station planning and environmental assessment of the proposed Red Line Extension. The organization and content of the liaison program was outlined in Chapter II. This chapter reviews implementation of this program in Cambridge, Somerville and Arlington, and presents the results of these efforts. Local issues and concerns identified during the liaison effort are outlined by community and station areas. Finally, legal constraints, such as policies, plans and zoning ordinances, relevant to the project are reviewed and summarized.

CAMBRIDGE

Community Liaison Programs

Citizen advisory groups and broad base community participation programs were established for the three stations located within the City of Cambridge including the Porter Square Transportation Advisory Group and the Alewife Task Force. These advisory groups served as the principal vehicle for implementing the community liaison program. The liaison program varied significantly owing to the uniqueness of the Harvard Square Station, the local neighborhood orientation of the Porter Square Station, and the broader regional significance of the Alewife Station.

Harvard Square

Based on interviews and review of previous studies, groups and individuals active in the Harvard Square area were identified. Those groups and individuals potentially affected by the project were also identified and were kept informed of the project's status through the study. Letters were sent to public officials informing them of the study's progress. In addition, a news release announcing the beginning of the study appeared in the Cambridge Chronicle on July 4, 1974.


Staff Supplementary Report to the Program for Mass Transportation, MBTA, August 1966.


The Planning and Community Development Department in each community furnished selected reference material that was concerned with studies and reports prepared for that specific area. In addition to the above material, copies of technical memos, current graphics and maps showing the various transit line and station alternatives, and copies of the minutes from the station area Task Force and Transportation Advisory Group meetings were also on file.

Pre-addressed and stamped comment cards were placed in the project libraries for the convenience of those who might have questions or comments concerning the reference material or the project in general. A De Leuw, Cather & Company staff member responded to each request.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions are implied for terms used throughout this report:
and business groups. These meetings served to inform the members of the community, who were not active participants in the community liaison effort, of the Consultant's activities and progress. They were arranged through invitations from the various organizations or at the suggestion of the Consultant so that the broadest possible coverage of the community could be maintained. These presentations also generated interest in the project and drew additional people into the TAG and Task Force meetings. The Chambers of Commerce in Cambridge, Somerville, and Arlington; businessmen's associations in Porter and Davis Square; and neighborhood organizations such as the Ward Six Civic Association in Somerville, the North Cambridge Planning Team and the East Arlington Neighborhood Association are examples of the groups that were involved. A list of regional and municipal agencies, business and citizens groups, and businesses that were contacted during the study is contained in the Appendices.

Corridor Libraries

To provide easy access to project information and facilitate maximum participation by the public, project libraries were established in each Red Line corridor community. The Central Library in Cambridge, the West Branch of the Somerville Library, and Robbins Library in Arlington Center were designated as corridor libraries.

With the assistance of George Sanborn, MBTA librarian, each library was stocked with the following reference material relative to the present and previous Red Line studies:


BTPR Red Book Summary

II-4
Improvement project. The Alewife Task Force, in addition to rapid transit issues, addressed the problems inherent in this project.

The TAG's for the Porter Square, Davis Square and Arlington stations met every three to four weeks from January to June of 1975. The Alewife Task Force, due to its later start and the complexity of the issues, met every two weeks during March and April; weekly in May and June; and every two weeks from July to December, 1975.

Summary notes covering each TAG and Task Force meeting were prepared by the Study Team for distribution to the members prior to the following meeting. These summaries identified the important issues and questions raised during the meetings, and were used in establishing the agenda for subsequent meetings as well as to pinpoint the concerns the Consultant should examine. The mailing lists of the five groups totaled over 350 persons.

Red Line Working Committee

The Red Line Working Committee (RLWC), under the auspices of the Central Transportation Planning Staff, was responsible for considering and coordinating corridor-wide issues. Its members included representatives from State and regional agencies in addition to business and citizen groups from Cambridge, Somerville, Belmont, Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford. At the monthly meetings of the RLWC, the Study Team reported on the progress in each station area and summaries of the TAG and Task Force meetings were distributed. The Consultant also kept minutes of these meetings and distributed them by mail to approximately 85 persons on the RLWC mailing list.

Presentations and Informational Talks

Other important aspects of the community liaison program included presentations and informational talks to civic organizations...
the Town of Arlington, established citizen participation programs which fully involved the public in the planning processes. Advice was solicited by the Consultant and consensus reached on such items as transit alignment, station location and design, parking, access, environmental impacts, and land use development. Major elements of the community liaison program included:

Station Area Transportation Advisory Groups and Task Forces

For each proposed station, a Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) or Task Force was established to advise the responsible governing bodies and agencies and provide input to the planning process concerning station development and related alternatives. The TAG's or Task Forces, which were established with the assistance of the MBTA and the local municipal governments, were responsible for presenting the public's viewpoint for each of the station areas. For the Porter Square, Davis Square, Arlington Center and Arlington Heights stations the MBTA asked the local governments to appoint a TAG to work with the Study Team. Studies of the Harvard Square area, which began earlier than the remainder of the stations, were coordinated with various groups listed in the Appendix. The makeup of the Transportation Advisory Groups consisted of representatives from local citizens groups; businessmen and business organizations; and the municipal governments. This cross section of interests and viewpoints contributed to a consensus on the issues affecting the needs of the entire community.

Because of the regional nature of the Alewife Area, the MAPC, assisted by the MBTA, the Massachusetts Department of Public Works, and the City of Cambridge, organized the Alewife Task Force and appointed Lawrence Susskind, Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at M.I.T., as Chairman. Representatives of State and regional agencies; the cities and towns of Cambridge, Somerville, Arlington and Belmont; and private interest groups and businesses were invited to participate. The MAPC letter of invitation as well as a list of the communities and organizations represented on the Alewife Task Force are included in the Supplemental Data Volume.

Concurrently with the Red Line Extension project, the Massachusetts Department of Public Works conducted an environmental impact study in connection with the Route 2 Highway
Chapter II

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

An interdisciplinary team was assembled which included professionals in traffic and transportation, land use, air pollution, noise and vibration, railroad operations, civil engineering, parks and recreation, ecology, architecture, urban design, historic resources, socio-economic analysis and community liaison.

The firm of Sverdrup & Parcel and Associates, Inc. was selected by the MBTA to perform the environmental analysis of the alternative alignments and station locations in the Harvard Square area. Associated with Sverdrup and Parcel on the Harvard Square portion of the project were Marcel Breuer & Associates, architectural design; Wilbur Smith and Associates, traffic analysis; and Bolt Beranek and Newman, Inc., noise and vibration analysis.

In a separate contract with the MBTA, De Leuw, Cather & Company was designated as the prime Consultant for the environmental analysis of the Red Line Extension from Harvard Square to Arlington Heights. Participating with De Leuw, Cather & Company on this portion of the project were Sverdrup & Parcel and Associates, Inc., engineering analysis and construction techniques; and Bolt Beranek and Newman, Inc., noise and vibration analysis. De Leuw, Cather & Company also established a Technical Advisory Group who were familiar with the project and provided specialized technical expertise.

COMMUNITY LIAISON

The Community Liaison Program was a major effort in conducting the environmental analysis of the Red Line Extension from Harvard Square to Arlington Heights. Throughout the planning process, Federal and State laws require the participation of citizens for public projects which will affect their lives. The Consultant, with the assistance of the MBTA, the Central Transportation Planning Staff and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council; the cities of Cambridge and Somerville; and
Station Area

The major focus of this study, in conjunction with an intensive community liaison program, was the selection and refinement of one alternative for each of the proposed station areas from alternatives developed by the BTPR and in previous Harvard Square Studies. This was considered as Phase II of a three-phase process described by CTPS as follows:

"It is proposed that station area development issues be addressed in three phases, paralleling the three phases of the direct transportation issues. Phase I -- The description of major transportation options and impacts, including impact on development opportunities, was completed with the production by the Boston Transportation Planning Review of the Northwest Report and the hearings thereon in May 1972. Phase II features a refinement of the transportation options and the impact analysis, producing sufficient technical information and agency and public participation to make firm decisions on the transportation facilities. Station area development opportunities thus become one of a number of important environmental, social, and economic impact criteria to be taken into account in making the transportation decisions, including station location. We are now in Phase II. Phase III would involve more refined and elaborate work on the development opportunities emerging from the transportation decisions with direct financial assistance to the municipalities and other agencies to conduct actual development planning. Phase II station area development issues will be dealt with by a continuation of technical resources and public and agency participation. Technical resources will be made available under the consultant contract with De Leuw, Cather, with supplementary assistance from the municipalities, the MAPC, Central Transportation Planning Staff, and other public agencies."

FORMAT OF THIS REPORT

In accordance with practices of the UMTA this Environmental Analysis Report identifies a single set of alternatives, which are
Prepare a comprehensive environmental analysis utilizing the environmental analyses contained in the BTPR Red Book and the Alewife Brook Parkway environmental studies to the maximum extent possible. The analysis to be sufficiently comprehensive to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Sections 3(d) and 14 of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 as amended, UMTA Order 5610.1, and FHWA PFM 90-2, Noise Standards and Procedures.

Prepare cost estimates for the project including costs for right-of-way, utility relocation, maintenance of traffic and unit costs for all project elements.

Prepare a preliminary construction schedule and a cash flow schedule.

Prepare alternative plans for provision of freight service which currently utilizes the affected railroad rights-of-way.

Develop a program of community liaison, provide technical assistance to participating groups, and prepare material for and attend public meetings and hearings. Under the terms of existing Cooperation Agreements between the MBTA and the Cities of Cambridge and Somerville, all work was to be performed in close collaboration with municipal officials. Provisions were to be made for developing and maintaining community participation and to conduct discussions with Federal, State, and local agencies during the entire study process. All work was to be done in collaboration with the Joint Regional Transportation Committee (JRTC) and the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS). Approximately ten percent of the total contract resources were to be allocated to this effort.
Review work currently being done at Alewife Brook Parkway, and, based on this review and on meetings with local officials, incorporate or prepare preliminary plans, profiles, and station layouts as required.

Review previous studies related to parking demand and capabilities for providing parking at station locations and, based on that review, prepare preliminary plans and layouts for parking facilities at alternative sites of varying capacities.

Prepare revised preliminary station layouts for Harvard Square, Porter Square, Davis Square, Alewife, Arlington Center and Arlington Heights in collaboration with local officials.

Prepare revised plans, profiles and typical sections for the recommended alignment based on the above work items.

Prepare the necessary plans, station layouts and analyses for Harvard Square so that final agreement can be reached on the specifics of connecting the existing line under Massachusetts Avenue easterly of Harvard Square to a future tunnel under Massachusetts Avenue north of the Cambridge Common. In the evaluation process all alternatives to be engineered shall be expected to meet the following requirements, except under most unusual circumstances:

(1) Maintain a bus tunnel connecting Massachusetts Avenue with Mount Auburn Street.

(2) Maintain at least the same level or a higher level of public transportation in the Harvard Square Area.

(3) Provide pedestrian access from the Harvard Square Station to Brattle Square.

(4) Be capable of construction without serious disruption to traffic or business activity in the square.

(5) Maintain transit turnback and train storage capabilities at Harvard Square.

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Analysis", "Draft Environmental Impact Statement", "Preliminary Location Report", and "Program Package Evaluation Report" were prepared in 1973 and are referred to as the BTPR Red Book. Its function was to identify, evaluate and refine alternatives for the Northwest Subregion. A summary of this analysis and the subsequent narrowing of alternatives is covered in Chapter III of this report.

SCOPE OF CURRENT STUDY

This Environmental Analysis Report is the major work product of a study undertaken in December 1974 by De Leuw, Cather & Company associated with Sverdrup & Parcel and Associates, Inc. (the Consultant) and a study undertaken in June 1974 by Sverdrup & Parcel and Associates, Inc. in the Harvard Square area. Noise and vibration analyses were performed by Bolt Beranek and Newman, Inc. Marcel Brueur Architects and Wilbur Smith and Associates also participated in the Harvard Square Study.

Purpose of This Study

The purposes of the overall study of a Red Line Extension from Harvard Square to Arlington Heights were to:

- Prepare a comprehensive environmental analysis for distribution to environmental agencies with statutory responsibility for review and comment and for presentation at a public hearing on the project.

- Gather additional information for the environmental assessment, following the public hearing, to support the Environmental Impact Statement to be prepared by UMTA.

- Perform engineering services as required in support of the above purposes and in support of a capital grant application to be prepared by the MBTA.

Technical Services

The Consultant was to provide the following services:

- Review earlier reports on the proposed Red Line Extension, utilizing all information developed in previous studies to the maximum extent possible.
the MBTA. It was proposed that Red Line rolling stock be equipped with pantographs for overhead power pickup for use on the Fitchburg and Lexington lines, with access to downtown Boston via a Red Line tunnel extension from Harvard Square to Alewife Brook Parkway. Green Line equipment would be used via Lechmere on the New Hampshire line and between Lechmere and Alewife Brook Parkway on the Fitchburg line.

A 1972 EOTC-MBTA report, "Commuter Railroad Improvement Program" proposed the preservation and gradual upgrading of existing railroad service with emphasis on short-term improvements.

The MBTA's April 1973 "Preliminary Tunneling Studies Report" examined the feasibility of shield-driven tunneling on selected alternative routes, and evaluated the type or types of construction appropriate for each alternative. The BTNR included information developed for this tunneling study in its "Preliminary Environmental Analysis", "Draft Environmental Impact Statement", "Preliminary Location Report" and "Program Package Evaluation Report", January 1973.

In April 1974, the City of Cambridge requested that the MBTA study alternatives A-(l), D and G in Harvard Square as general alignments with considerable latitude in the location of station platforms, access, bus tunnels and related issues. The request was based on (1) a report prepared by the Cambridge Planning and Development Department titled "How to Get Out of Harvard Square in a Train", dated February 1974, (2) review and recommendations on the content of the report by the Cambridge City Manager's Harvard Square Development Task Force, the Cambridge Transportation Forum, the Transportation Committee of the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Traffic and Parking and (3) comments from individual citizens.

The Boston Transportation Planning Review

The Boston Transportation Planning Review (BTNR) Study was initiated in 1970. Conducted with extensive community involvement, the study covered a comprehensive range of transportation alternatives. The "Northwest Preliminary Environmental
In 1969, at the request of the General Court, the MBTA prepared a report entitled "Alternative Programs for Suburban Commuter Service". The report contained three alternative plans for consideration by the MBTA Advisory Board and the legislature.

Plan A proposed to continue existing railroad service on the Fitchburg, New Hampshire and Woburn routes and terminate service on the Lexington line. The Red Line would be extended to Alewife Brook Parkway.

Plan B proposed to discontinue railroad service and institute express bus service between Route 128 and a Red Line terminal at Alewife Brook Parkway. Busways would be constructed on the Fitchburg and Lexington rights-of-way.

Plan C would maintain commuter railroad service to those areas between North Station and the new terminals at Route 128 in Waltham and Woburn on the Fitchburg and New Hampshire routes, respectively. The remaining railroad service would be replaced by express bus operation on the Lexington Branch between Route 128 and a Red Line terminal at Alewife Brook Parkway.

None of the plans were acceptable to the MBTA Advisory Board primarily because no agreement could be reached on the need for the proposed improvements or on the means for financing these improvements.

In October 1970, the Cambridge City Council passed a resolution urging the MBTA to give high priority to the Harvard-Alewife transit extension, locating the line in tunnel/deep bore throughout its length. The MBTA was also requested to consider a Garden Street alignment. In the same year, the Governor called a moratorium on planning and construction of several highways within the Boston Metropolitan Area including Route 2 and the Inner Belt in Cambridge. The Governor then created the Boston Transportation Planning Review (BTPR) to evaluate several highway and transit alternatives, and the MBTA initiated new tunneling studies for the Red Line Extension.

Electrification of the commuter railroad lines over the next 20 years was considered in a 1972 report, "Plan for Acquisition and Use of Railroad Rights-of-Way" prepared by T. K. Dyer for
In March 1967, the MBTA released a report entitled "Interim Report on Harvard Square Site Studies". This study presented four schemes (indicated as Lines A, B, C and D) for improving or relocating both the Harvard Square Station and the tunnel alignment and grade from the station to a point on Massachusetts Avenue near Everett and Chauncy Streets. At this point, the four lines would merge into one alignment to the Porter Square Station.

A route was developed in a 1968 "Preliminary Engineering Report" that generally consisted of cut-and-cover tunnel construction from Harvard Square along Massachusetts Avenue to Porter Square; at-grade construction along the Boston and Maine's Fitchburg right-of-way between Porter Square and Alewife Brook Parkway; and a terminal at Alewife. A group of West Cambridge residents vigorously opposed this plan, particularly that portion along the railroad right-of-way. Objections were raised regarding the potential disruption to businesses and traffic along Massachusetts Avenue resulting from the cut-and-cover construction. The report also included preliminary design for a relocated Harvard Square Station and a 33-acre terminal at Alewife with a 1,900-car parking lot and transit car storage area. The proposed relocation of the Harvard Square Station also met opposition. Subsequently, further plans for the extension were temporarily stalled until a Cooperation Agreement between the City of Cambridge and the MBTA was signed in October 1970. The agreement essentially limited planning along any part of a proposed alignment by one party without the consent of the other. A similar agreement between the City of Somerville and the MBTA was signed in September 1972.

During this time, a number of other studies were conducted. The Eastern Massachusetts Regional Planning Project in its 1968 "Recommended Highway and Transit Plan" proposed that the Red Line be extended from the Alewife terminal to Route 128 in Lexington via Arlington Center by 1990. Commuter railroad service would be maintained until adequate rapid transit service could be provided.
Davis Square
Somerville, MA
Research by PPS’ Cynthia Nikitin

Brief history/background:

The City of Somerville capitalized on development of the new station, from its earliest planning stages, as a catalyst for revitalizing the Square by promoting new commercial development and sponsoring other physical improvements, while working to maintain its traditional urban character. These public improvements have also catalyzed private reinvestment in the Square’s adjoining residential areas. The success of the redevelopment efforts are largely attributed to close cooperation between the many stakeholders in the process. These stakeholders included the City, local business people and residents, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), and numerous Federal and Commonwealth agencies.

Planning Process

Davis Square, once a thriving commercial center, experienced a gradual decline in the post-World War II era. Between 1970 and 1980, the City of Somerville lost 2,000 jobs and the population dropped from 89,000 to 77,000, a 13% decline. Manufacturing, wholesale and retail businesses left the area. According to a planning study completed in 1980, Davis Square suffered from a lack of competitiveness among merchants, traffic congestion, inadequate parking and an increasingly deteriorated physical environment.

In the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, plans to expand the highway system in the Boston area met with stiff protest from community groups and local officials opposed to the massive land-takings required for highway construction. At the same time, Boston-area residents realized that public transportation was more practical than the automobile for commuting within Boston and from its outlying areas. Governor Sargent responded to this opposition in 1970, by signing a moratorium on highway construction within Route 128, a highway that encircles Boston, and setting up the Boston Transportation Planning Review to examine transportation plans for the Boston area.

In 1970, the Cambridge City Council urged the MBTA to seriously consider the extension of the Red Line, originally built in 1912, beyond Harvard Square as an alternative to a proposed highway. The route was to run from Harvard Square north through Cambridge to Arlington, but in 1973, Somerville residents, businesspeople and public officials -- realizing the economic benefits that a train and bus station would bring to their community -- launched a petition and letter writing campaign to the MBTA requesting that the extension be routed through Davis Square. In addition, Somerville was providing 5% of the MBTA’s budget, and without any subway station within its borders, Somerville residents felt that their transit service was unequal to their contribution. In contrast, the town of Arlington, concerned about traffic congestion, opposed the extension of the Red Line into its boundaries and its termination at Arlington Heights. As a result, the Red Line now terminates at Alewife, in North Cambridge.

In 1977, while the Red Line Extension was in the planning stage, the Somerville Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council put together the
first Davis Square urban design and business study. That same year, the Davis Square Task Force was formed, composed of local business owners, residents and local officials, to act as a citizens’ advisory committee regarding the revitalization plans and to address a major concern that was dividing the community on the type and extent of development. One faction was pushing for a major redevelopment project that would include the creation of an indoor shopping mall, while many local residents favored minimal change to the neighborhood. The OPCD commissioned outside consultants to study potential land use, including office and retail uses, traffic, parking and other issues. Along with input from the Task Force, the studies resulted in the Davis Square Action Plan, adopted in 1982. The primary goal of the Plan was to use the new Red Line Station as a cornerstone for redevelopment, strengthening Davis Square as a viable shopping district while preserving the residential character of the neighborhood.

**Strategy**

The City of Somerville and the Davis Square Task Force initiated many projects to accompany the Red Line extension, using the redevelopment, especially of empty parcels, to build the type of community that they had envisioned:

- Streetscape improvements with funds from the Federal Highway Administration’s Urban Systems Program, including street reconstruction, sidewalk widening, new lighting, fences and planting.
- The renovation of Kenney Park at the corner of Grove Street and Highland Ave.
- Storefront and facade improvements with a grant from the city’s Community Development Block Grant entitlement. With the grant, the city paid for one-half of the facade work on eligible properties and provided design assistance through the OPCD landmark constitutional decision allowing the removal of all billboards from Davis Square, initially, and then from the City of Boston as a whole. In 1995, a local bank established its own Storefront Improvement Program, available to Davis Square businesses.
- Designation of Davis Square as a Commercial Area Revitalization District (CARD) which allowed major commercial developments to use Industrial Revenue (IRB) financing through the Massachusetts Industrial Finance (MIFA). With IRB financing, the owners of the Errico building were able to renovate 6,000 square feet of retail and office space and add 12,000 square feet of new space.
- The construction of additional public parking, in small lots, throughout the Davis Square area.
- The construction of the Ciampa Manor Elderly Housing development on College Avenue. (Local residents favored residential over commercial development at this prime site, a gateway to Davis Square.)
- Planning and site development for the Buena Vista project, a $10 million, 100,000 square foot office and retail complex, that includes a public parking structure. An Urban Development Action Grant provided $1.7 million toward the initial development costs. This project was completed in 1991.

Private development efforts included the renovation of former manufacturing buildings and department stores in the Davis Square area to provide additional office and retail space. A locally owned, community-oriented bank was encouraged to construct a new building in the area and the old telephone building was converted into a drug and convenience store.
A bicycle path connects Davis Square to the towns of Arlington and Lexington, and bus stops, used by the MBTA and the Tufts University van service, connect local residents to the subway line. The subway station is also within walking distance of the large Alewife station parking garage. The streetscape improvements surrounding the Davis Square Station were designed to enhance the pedestrian access to the station and local businesses, and to slow traffic, while giving the commercial area a more coherent appearance.

The MBTA developed the plaza linking the two station entrance buildings, built on an old railroad right-of-way, and continued a greenway along the right-of-way as far as Alewife. The plaza is designed to serve as the center of Davis Square, providing a gathering place and a center for activities and outdoor entertainment. The MBTA’s Red Line extension qualified it to receive state percent-for-art moneys. One percent of the cost of constructing the new headhouses was used to commission the figurative sculptures, some representing local citizens, that adorn the plaza. In addition, tiles designed by neighborhood children were installed in the station and a large sculpture was commissioned to hang over the tracks. The public art projects fit in with the City’s goal of creating a community place; a place where residents could feel a sense of ownership.

At Mayor Capuano’s recommendation in 1995, the City’s Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD), with input from the Task Force, engaged a consultant to improve Davis Square Plaza/Statue Park and make it more attractive as a gathering place. The city will provide new and upgraded amenities for the plaza, such as improved lighting, and new furniture, landscaping and flag poles, and the MBTA will replace the station’s long skylight. The existing barrel-vaulted, plexiglass skylight extending across the plaza, obscures the view of adjacent stores and is out of scale with the neighboring buildings. A new, lower skylight of more durable materials is being planned to serve a dual purpose: it will also function as a podium or stage for speakers and performances.

City agencies are also working with the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) to add a second bicycle path through the square, with new bike racks near the station, and to improve bike connections to neighboring communities. Other community groups such as the Somerville Bicycle Committee and the Friends of the Bikeway are involved in the process. In addition, a new substation for the City’s community policing program, which includes police on bicycles, is being created within one of the station buildings. The continuing success of this project can be attributed both to the interagency cooperation between the MBTA, Mass Highway and the City of Somerville and to the ongoing involvement of the Davis Square Task Force and other community groups.

**Overcoming Obstacles**

During the planning stages, the resident members of the Davis Square Task Force struggled to keep Davis Square from becoming overdeveloped. According to Lee Auspitz, a long-time member of the Task Force, local residents (who at the time wielded more power than the business interests on the Task Force) had at first opposed the subway extension, fearing that it would "ruin the neighborhood." Preserving a stable, residential environment was their primary goal and they fought to prevent Davis Square from becoming just another regional shopping mall. If they had to have a subway then "the subway was to be there for the community, not the community for the subway".
While local businesses pushed for an increase in parking, residents thought more parking would lead to the disintegration of the urban fabric of the neighborhood. "Park and Ride" became a dirty word and even "kiss and ride" drop-offs were discouraged. As a result, no facilities for commuter parking are provided today in Davis Square. The Task Force fought long and hard to keep Davis Square pedestrian-oriented, even helping to defeat a mayor who favored large-scale commercial redevelopment of the area and the construction of large parking structures.

The Task Force also encouraged the MBTA to minimize its intervention in the neighborhood; while the MBTA had initially planned to demolish sixty-four houses and businesses, it ultimately removed only four houses. The Task Force and local citizens, through various tactics, were able to convince the MBTA to accommodate the needs of the community both in the design and planning of the station and throughout the long and disruptive construction phase. Goody Clancy’s project architect was a resident of Davis Square himself and worked closely with local citizens to integrate the station buildings into the existing fabric with as little disruption as possible.

**Elements of Note:** Davis Square is home to many annual community events such as ArtBeat, sponsored by the Somerville Arts Council. Also, the plaza is periodically used for public speaking.

The Somerville Theater, a historic landmark in the Square, is capitalizing upon the Square’s improvements as well as its proximity to transit. Its monthly programs, which include live as well as film performances, attract a regional audience and enjoys renewed patronage. Its restoration and reconstruction, scheduled for 1996, reflects favorably upon the Square’s recent improvements.

Davis Square is also host to new commercial office space. Since 1988, two substantial office buildings totaling approximately 170,000 square feet have been completed, and are at 100% occupancy. Building tenants include a major regional community health care provider, a medium-sized architectural firm, and headquarters for a local bank. Also, the Square hosts a number of start-up businesses.

Taken together, these activities add vitality to the Square, both during and after traditional business hours. Undoubtedly, the transit improvements have contributed significantly to the Square’s overall health. The transit station has made it possible for people to reach the Square without bringing cars into the densely settled area. Rent control was abolished recently in the neighboring communities of Cambridge, Boston and Brookline, and the affordable housing available in Somerville, combined with access to its good public transit, has made it an attractive place for people to locate. Other factors which increased the Square’s attractiveness include changes in living preferences and increased private transportation costs, which bolsters support for public transit use.

The Red Line Extension Land Use Study, prepared in 1988 by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, analyzed the changes in land use and commercial and residential development five years after the completion of the extension. The report states, "Davis Square appears to have passed the turning point on its way to recovery. Businesses in the Square, old and new alike, are generally thriving and public confidence is high. The Red Line clearly ... helped to stimulate this revitalization, but it was clearly accomplished only by a cooperative effort of the municipality,
local merchants, and the residents of Davis Square." Specifically, the report states that businesses
near the station show increased sales and office and retail uses rose by 10 percent.

Reference


Project for Public Spaces, Inc. 153 Waverly Place New York, NY 10014 (212) 620-5660 pps@pps.org, http://www.pps.org
Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
Urban Case Study

Davis Square, Somerville, Massachusetts

Davis Square has long been the primary commercial center in Somerville, a city of 76,000 adjacent to Cambridge and Boston. Prior to World War II, the Square, which grew up around freight railroad tracks, flourished as a center of industry and commerce. Beginning in the 1950s, the area fell into decline, and by the early 1970s empty storefronts and deteriorating buildings and infrastructure characterized the area. Today, Davis Square is a vibrant urban center that boasts a mix of retail, office, institutional, residential and entertainment uses. Through careful planning and land assembly, the City integrated redevelopment of existing structures with new development of over 170,000 square feet of office and retail space, as well as new multi-family housing.
A Transit Oriented Revitalization

In 1970, the MBTA began planning the extension of the Red Line from Harvard Square north to Arlington, with the original plans bypassing Somerville entirely. Recognizing that a Red Line station could act as a catalyst for the revitalization of Davis Square, a group of Somerville residents, businesspersons, and city officials began a campaign to reroute the Red Line through Somerville with a stop in Davis Square. This early foresight by the community commenced a long public planning process to revitalize Davis Square using the Red Line station as the cornerstone of their effort.

The revitalized Davis Square represents a thriving urban transit-oriented development area. The success of this TOD can be traced to several factors. First and foremost, the community came together in the early planning stages of the Red Line expansion program and created a partnership between residents, businesses and public officials that remains in place today. Early in the planning process, the City established a Davis Square Task Force, which developed the Davis Square Action Plan, a document that continues to guide development in the Square. The Action Plan addressed building reuse and demolition, streetscape and facade improvements, pedestrian amenities, parking, traffic, and land use. The City designated a redevelopment area within the square that allowed for property acquisition and clearance, infrastructure improvements, and some public control over new private development within the area. A Design Review Overlay District helps ensure that redevelopment and new construction blends in with the existing built environment and encourages pedestrian activity.

Multiple Stakeholders for an Integrated Approach

The City also worked diligently with state and federal agencies to package grants to finance civic improvements throughout the square. These included:

- Streetscape improvements such as street and sidewalk reconstruction, street lighting, fencing and plantings, funded through the Federal Highway Administration's Urban Systems Program.
- The utilization of Community Development Block Grants to finance a storefront and façade improvement program, which was later continued by a local bank and is now entirely market driven with no public funding.
- Designation of the Square as a Commercial Area Revitalization District (CARD), which allowed the use of industrial revenue bonds for infrastructure and building improvements.
- The use of Urban Development Action Grant money for planning and site development for the 100,000 square feet Buena Vista office and retail complex.
- The development of elderly housing and new parking for businesses.
- Renovations to existing parks and the creation of new parks with the assistance of the MBTA and the Massachusetts Highway Department.
- The reuse of old freight railroad right-of-way for bicycle and pedestrian pathways connecting to the Alewife T station, and the Minuteman bike path.
- Extensive public art in the T station and on public plazas adjacent to the two station entrances, paid for through the state percent-for-art funds program. This program allows 1% of station development costs to be used for public art.
To further encourage pedestrian activity and discourage auto usage in the square, the City convinced the T to provide commuter parking at the station. Further, traffic calming measures such as neck-downs, pedestrian safety islands, clearly marked brick crosswalks, signage, and pedestrian signalization all help to reduce the speed of traffic flow and improve pedestrian safety. Benches, trash receptacles, street lighting, plantings, public art, sidewalk materials, and public spaces all enhance the pedestrian experience. The T provides extensive facilities for bicycle storage at the station entrances. Surveys conducted in the late 1980s found that the majority of Red Line users accessed the T by foot, with only 13 percent using automobiles to arrive at the station. Further, while planners projected that only 3,000 riders per day would use the Davis Square Red Line station, daily ridership exceeds 10,000.
Green Line project starting public outreach

By Rob Barry/rbarry@cnc.com

Tue Jan 15, 2008, 04:43 PM EST

Medford - The Green Line Extension Project Advisory Group will be kicking off its campaign for increased public involvement this month after some criticism that Medford and Somerville residents have not been informed enough about the project.

The group will be holding a series of meetings to discuss new station locations in both cities with members of the potentially affected neighborhoods.

“The history has been, ‘We are not participating because we didn’t know,’” said Advisory Group member and prudence enthusiast, William Wood at a Jan. 9 meeting.

Starting at the end of this month there will be a general information meeting followed by five station workshops. The general information meeting will be held on Jan. 23 at the Medford City Hall in the City Council chambers, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and will be designed to inform the general public about the project.

The station workshops will invite local communities to discuss ideas for specific placement of the new stations. Their schedules will be printed as they approach.

Kristine Wickham of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB), the consulting firm heading the project, said the relative locations of the new stations are set.

“We’re not talking about whether a station will exist at Lowell Street,” said Wickham. “We’re talking about where on Lowell Street it will be.”

Wood, who has been gunning for more public involvement since the Advisory Group was formed, said the proposed meetings are not enough.

“We’re using a five-day process to get the people of Medford in,” said Wood. “That is not correct.”

Others at the meeting did not share Wood’s skepticism.

“I feel compelled to say that Dr. Wood does not speak for all the residents of Medford,” said Elizabeth Vale of the Medford Green Line Neighborhood Alliance (MGNA). “I want you to proceed with all deliberate speed; I’m going to be retired before this project is finished.”

She said things seem to be moving according to plan and that there is no cause for concern.

Medford resident, Jim Morse said he thinks the path of the proposed extension should be discussed more.

“I say stop it in Ball Square and I’d love to see it in Medford Square,” said Morse, “but not in the Hillside.”

He suggested that places of commerce would benefit from new T stops more than residential neighborhoods.

But the Advisory Group says it is no longer a matter of which intersections in which to place stations. They’re starting to look at which buildings they may need. Nobody spoke about eminent domain at the meeting, but it is expected to become a matter of discussion as the public becomes more involved.

“The most important thing is to get out into the community and really talk to people,” said Wickham.

To learn more about the project visit www.greenlineextension.org.
That's a pretty good summary of what I said but this is more like what I actually said.

I'm Jim Morse and I'm sick as a dog but I thought that it was important that I speak tonight. I have about 20 reasons why I am opposed to a Green Line stop in Medford but having only a couple of minutes to talk, I'll just focus on one area.

I live on Metcalf Street in Medford. It's called the Barry Park area or the Summer Street area or the George Street area. We do not consider our neighborhood the 'Hillside.' A T stop anywhere along Boston Ave from College Ave to Winthrop street is the Hillside and it will affect us.

A T stop in the 'Hillside,' is not in Medford. It is not in Somerville. It is in Tufts. At College Ave, Tufts owns all buildings along Boston Ave down to Harvard Street and beyond and all the surrounding land for many blocks.

Long after the MBTA is gone and long after the state is gone we will still be there and Tufts will still be there. Tufts could put in a 2000 car private parking garage and there is nothing that we could do about it. We would have to deal with all the traffic in our neighborhood. I would be happy with the T stopping in Ball Square.

Mystic ave is better

Mike C.

Why not extend the orange line down Mystic ave from Sullivan Square. Its a straight shot

Mike C.

These meeting are useless. The fact that is was stated that it is not a question of if a station will be built on a certain street but where on that street it will be built tells me all I need to know. This is a done deal!!! The green line is coming and there is nothing that Medford can do to stop it. With all the money needed for our existing infrastructure needs, this project should be DOA, but the tree huggers have prevailed. We have enough public transit in Medford. Let's hope that the money suffocates this plan before it ever gets off the ground.

Next Stop: Lechmere

Mike C.

I will never understand how Medford does not have enough public transportation. The last time I checked there is Orange Line service, MBTA local and express bus service and commuter rail service. This is not about sticking ones' head in the sand, but about looking at fiscal responsibility of our State Government in the current economy. It makes absolutely no sense to me to spend hundreds of millions of taxpayer money on a new project, when our current infrastructure is falling down around us.

Next Stop: Lechmere

Mike C.

Mike, do you rely on public transportation for anything? If you did I'm sure you wouldn't consider it anywhere near adequate. You should use the trip planner on the MBTA website to see how long it takes to get anywhere in the Boston area outside of rush hour during the week. It can take two hours just to get to Inman Sq and that's if one of the several buses you'll need to take shows up. We should be investing in our infrastructure and it's a lot more cost efficient to invest in mass transit than building another road.

Mike C.
Not to beat a dead horse but yes I do have occasion to take public transit from Wellington Station. As far as our infrastructure is concerned, I never suggested building more roads, but rather fixing the roads, bridges and tunnels we already have. In the end nothing I say is going to change the fact that this project is getting built regardless of if it is a good idea or not.

Bill R.
1 year ago
Report Abuse

jim, just curious to why you think the green line will affect you on metcalf st. when they are proposing it along the existing rail tracks, which are half a mile away.

Jim Morse
1 year ago
Report Abuse

Well Bill, one reason is traffic.

I mentioned this at the meeting at the McGlynn School about a year ago so here goes.

At one time, Rt. 16 and Winthrop St was the 3rd worst intersection in fatalities in the state. Some of these accidents were particularly gory and I will not go into the details online. When the weather warms up you can most definitely come by my house and we can sit on my front porch and I'll describe some of them to you.

This went on for years until the old MDC finally came up with the solution that you see today - single lanes and no turns through the oncoming traffic. This is a form of 'traffic calming,' and it worked. There were consequences of this reduction in traffic flow and one of the most significant ones is that the East bound lane backs up past the lights at Auburn Street. It still does today. The cars race up to the lights from Boston Ave and get stuck in the middle of the intersection in a gridlock.

When you are trying to get out of the Wild Oat's parking lot, it is not uncommon to have to wait for 2 or 3 green lights to get out!

Shortly thereafter the changes to Winthrop St. and Rt 16, the commuters figured out that they could by-pass the intersection and cut down West St, Cotting St, or Marshall St to Winthrop St. and save a few minutes. Some of these cars were going down West St at 40 mph. The neighbors banded together and made all those streets one-ways. The persistent motorists found out that they could illegally take Marshall St and take the quick right onto Orchard St so they eventually had to make Orchard St a one-way too.

The people who live west of Lyman Ave also had to honor the one-ways and they were and are inconvenienced by not being able to take the shorter and faster route to Winthrop St. They too have to go through Auburn St or up North St to Boston Ave.

The heavy-traffic in this area is one of my objections to a T stop here. Look at the traffic in Station Landing!

What does this have to do with Metcalf Street you might ask? Prior to the redesign, vehicles were directed to Tufts by signs from Rt. 93 down Main Street, right on Rt. 16 and left on Winthrop St to Tufts. When the left onto Winthrop st was made a one-way the route to Tufts was changed so that the cars continue on Main St, take a right onto George St and then a left on College Ave. You can see the signs today.

This increase in traffic has impacted the whole neighborhood and in recent years a traffic light had to be installed at George Street and Main Street. When I leave my house there are only two ways to get out to Main St, - Emerson St or South St. and it is not uncommon to sit and wait there for long periods of time for a break in the steady flow of traffic from Medford Square. These people are driving very fast and they are aggressive. Sometimes they do not even stop for people in the cross walk and this is right in front of the police station.

The closest site of any of the proposed T stops to me is College Ave and I strongly believe that the traffic would only get worse not to mention how Permit Parking is creeping down all the streets from Windsor Road to George Street.
Jim, simple solution... advocate for parking restrictions in concert with any Green Line extension. No need to be a NIMBYite when such simple mitigation procedures can be put in place. The Green Line extension will be a benefit for Medford residents, not commuters and there are ways to ensure that.

You should also note that the traffic problems at Station Landing and Wellington circle are not because of the Orange Line, they are because the road is inadequate to handle the traffic and a poor road design. Mass transit takes cars off the road, not on it.

Jim Morse
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Permit Parking is a step down and you only get it when there is a problem and I am a professional NIMBYite.

The GLE will be a big expense and all it will do is cut down the wait time of 20 minutes for a bus, to 5 minutes for a LRV. If I have to go in town, I can grab the 101 or the 95 and be at Sullivan in 20 minutes. I have the 94, the 96 and the 80 all within a block too!

Yeah there are problems with late and non-existent buses. There are problems with LRV’s too.

Any station in the Hillside will be a boon to Tufts and I say let them pay the $600 million for it (probably a billion) and not the cash-strapped, almost in foreclosure, leaving the state in droves taxpayers.

No station, no mitigation! Hey that would be a great bumper-sticker. If they put a stop on College Ave, I want a tunnel from the front of my house to Rt 93. Now that's mitigation!

If an inadequate road is the cause of the traffic problems at Station Landing, why hasn't the state put any money into fixing it?

I have never seen any proof that Mass Transit takes any cars off the road. Look at Portland, Oregon a poster child for Smart Growth, They are suffocating in Benzene from gasoline powered cars. Got stats?

Here's my opinion of Smart Growth. It's a loaded phrase. The word smart implies that is is good but in reality, it really is bad.

It's pushed on us, the people who will live in congested housing, by people who live in single family homes, with every adult in the family driving a car, in a wealthy neighborhood without any type of Permit Parking.

Look at the devastation that a West Medford stop would have caused...going over the River...ripping up homes...shutting down West Medford Square every 5 minutes. The negatives greatly outweighed the benefits. What about the people who will be affected by eminent domain? Do they benefit? Do they count?

The North side of Ball Square is in Medford. I say stop it there.

I think I'm getting blog'ed out.

Orisis
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Jim, I'm glad you're comfortable with the term NIMBY, since that's all you are. Your reasons for opposing the Green Line in Medford lack any logic or reasoning. You're willing to continue to inconvenience thousands of people in Medford because you don't like traffic a half a mile away from your house. I hope you weren't around when 93 was put in.

Rachel
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Can you expand upon why permit parking is a no-go? Seems to me that if we have Green Line stations that don't provide parking for commuters why would they travel a mile through Medford to find non-existant parking. Why is it a step down? Doesn't make any sense to me.
Also, correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't the proposal for the Green Line to be in the same corridor as the commuter rail tracks already in place? How would people be affected by eminent domain when the corridor is already there? I can see the T needing a temporary easement during construction and maybe taking a couple of square feet of people's back yards, but they would have to be compensated by that. Also, they haven't even started surveying for the extension yet. How do you know they need to take any land by eminent domain?

Seems to me it's way too early in the process to say yea or nay on this. People should slow down. Listen to what others have to say and wait for the planning process to take place and ask smart questions. This whole fear-mongering going on is really uneducated.

T-Man 1 year ago

Report Abuse

Jim, I have a very good source. It's the Beyond Lechmere Corridor Study. Sounds like you haven't read it. Here's the link: http://www.eot.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/grLineExt&sid=about

Here are some highlights:

In terms of work commute mode choice, Medford residents within the study area have the highest reliance on the automobile for commuting trips (62%) and the lowest walk/bike (7%) and transit (20%) mode shares. For those who take public transportation, travel times to work between 30 and 44 minutes are the most common. The most common travel time to work for those commuting by means other than public transportation is less than 30 minutes.

Read: Public transportation as it stands now is inconvenient and most people in Medford choose to drive rather than wait for public transportation

The study area is located within an area designated non-attainment for ozone by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), with a classification of “serious”. Motor vehicles are the predominant sources of ozone precursor emissions within the study area. These emissions are exacerbated by truck traffic through the area. Reducing auto VMT and cutting consequent emissions of volatile organic compounds and carbon monoxide compels the need to improve transit options and promote a shift in travel mode from automobiles.

Read: We have traffic congestion problems now in Medford and automobiles are a significant cause. Better transit options reduce automobile traffic and are healthier for Medford residents

Roadway congestion, long travel times and multiple transfer connections also constrain access by study area residents to other important destinations, including private and public colleges and universities, medical facilities and specialties, cultural facilities, and sporting events. The growth of these institutions is also constrained by the limitations of the transportation system. Improved transit services would make economic, educational, medical and recreational opportunities within the study area and the region more accessible to corridor households.

Read: Current mass transit options are inadequate and inconvenient and Medford is hurting because of it.

Here's also an article on how the Mayor is pushing for funding to improve the Wellington Circle intersection:

'If the issue is clean air, then give us the money to do a grade separation at Wellington Circle,' he (Mayor McGlynn) said. 'It will cut traffic in half, and improve the air quality.'

So again, traffic problems at Wellington Circle are caused by the intersection and cars, not the orange line. Why else would an improvement there cut traffic in half? I also notice much of the traffic congestion at Wellington Circle on weekends when the parking lots at Wellington are next to empty. How is that possible?

Ken Krause 1 year ago

Report Abuse

Yes, please go back and read the Beyond Lechmere report. It's a moot point now, but the extension was NEVER proposed to cross High Street (and thus not disrupt traffic every five minutes). The location identified in the Beyond Lechmere report was between Canal and High Streets. Certainly there were issues and concerns with this location, as there are elsewhere along the corridor, but the potential High Street traffic disruption was one of many non-issues created by opponents of the project.

Mike C. 1 year ago

Report Abuse

Why is it that when someone questions extending the Green Line through Somerville and Medford their questions are labeled as 'uneducated'? Despite all of the studies, the fact of the matter is no one truly knows the affect this extension would have on the traffic.
will have on traffic. As far as eminent domain is concerned, the current commuter rail corridor would have to be expanded to accommodate an inbound and outbound green line track configuration which means there will be some eminent domain takings. As with any major undertaking there are benefits as well as drawbacks. Just because some of us are more willing to look at the potential drawbacks doesn't make us 'uneducated'.

to: Mike C
1 year ago
Report Abuse
taking the Orange Line 'on occasion' is very different than depending on public transportation to get to work every day. I take the 94 bus every morning and the (alleged 'rush hour') buses often don't show up near or on time -- or show up at all! I had a nightmare day last month where another passenger and I stood out in the freezing cold waiting for the 8:45 bus, to Davis which never showed up... then the 9:15 bus didn't show up, either... It's also a known fact that the 94 often just doesn't show up on the weekend. A couple of us loudly complained and Rep Sciortino (spelling?) had to flex some muscle to get any attention paid to this problem.

This situation would just never happen on a T line.

--margaret weigel
Rachel
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Mike, I do not mean that anyone who disagrees with the Green Line extension is automatically uneducated. What I mean is that some of the statements made by Jim (and others) are unnecessary at this point in the planning stage. The fact is, we don't know if eminent domain is going to be needed, because surveying hasn't even started yet. I would call that unnecessary fear-mongering and uneducated when no one has the facts yet in that area.

You are right there are certainly drawbacks to this plan, but one shouldn't be so dismissive of the benefits as well. Those who are supporting the plan at this point shouldn't be so dismissive of the drawbacks either.

jim Morse
1 year ago
Report Abuse
I was around when Rt 93 was built and I remember how hard the NIMBYites in the Ten Hills section of Somerville along Mystic Ave fought to save their homes. I also remember how hard the residents of Water St and Webster St fought to save their homes. I also remember how the state promised sound barriers to the abutters especially on Brookside Parkway and how they are still waiting over 40 years for those sound barriers. There are some people who will fight back if you try to take their back yards or homes.

Several years ago, the residents of Governor's Ave and South Border Road had a problem with the bikers and hikers taking all of the parking in front of their houses. They asked for Permit Parking and got it. Police Chief Sacco told them publicly that they could have it but he also warned them that it's not as great as it sounds and that there will be residents who don't like it.

One of the reasons that I don't like it is because you only get two parking permits for friends and family. What if you have three friends?

Years ago I had a girlfriend who lived on Maple Street in Malden. The street went Permit Parking and when I went to visit her house which was a set-back apartment building, I sometimes would have to park anywhere from one to three blocks away. I would then have to walk up to her building, get the permit, walk back to my car and put it in the window. In the amount of time that it takes to do this, I would get get ticketed. I would have to repeat the same process to leave and always be at risk of another ticket. Needless to say, I became reluctant to visit her.

Look at some of the streets and areas that have Permit Parking in Medford and you will see that each area got it to resolve a problem - people who don't live in the area taking all the parking.

Upper Governor's Ave - The hikers and bikers using the Mdsx Fells Wrights Pond - The lot fills up and the overflow takes up all the surrounding spots. West Medford - The out of city commuters. South Medford - The Tufts crowd.

Every Sunday around here some of the neighbors have friends and family over and the street which normally has pretty good parking fills up. We don't mind. It's a tradition that's been going on for many years and I would not like to see that
Yes Ken, you are right but I was really not involved in the West Medford proposal. It was going to have to cross Canal Street though.

T-Man, I'll get back to you later. I have read the Beyond Lechmere report and I've quoted it in the past. I will read the links that you provided and respond shortly. Thanks for not doing any name-calling. We have been called rumor-spreaders, fear-mongers and one of my personal favorites - extreme, hysterical, individuals. We are just citizens who are asked to formulate opinions and concerns based on the limited information that we are being provided at this stage of the project.

Bill R.

1 year ago

Report Abuse

Jim, not sure I follow that logic about the parking permits. You're concerned about traffic, but you oppose parking permits because they deter parking...? If your assumption is people are going to increase traffic driving to a T stop, but parking permits prevent them from parking, where are these people going to put their car while they are riding the T?

I certainly wouldn't drive my car to a T station knowing I couldn't park there. I would either take the bus or walk as long as the station is close.

Bill

Jim Morse

1 year ago

Report Abuse

Bill, traffic and permit parking are two different concerns. Assembly Mall, Station Landing, Rivers Edge and the Stoneham facility will all increase traffic but they have or will have pretty adequate parking. Any proposed T stop in Medford is supposedly not going to have any parking. I believe that they should not have any parking but this will also increase the need for pp. People will park where there is no pp.

Look at West Medford for an example. Permit parking was introduced and people have been observed parking as far away as the liquor store going towards Arlington. How far will people walk? I don't know. They say that people will walk about ten minutes to get to a T stop. How far can people walk in 10 minutes? I do about half a mile. Hey, that's almost exactly the distance from my house to College Ave!

Look's what happening in South Medford. Now I'm doing this from memory so I could be wrong but to the best of my knowledge, Princeton St. and Yale St and I think Dartmouth and Wellesley all went pp. Last year, Windsor Rd HAD to go pp. I think Frederick, Stanley and Pearl are either pp or contemplating it.

This is what happens. The motorists keep parking on the next available street causing the need for more and more pp. I know that Orchard Street is pp and last time I checked Charnwood was considering going.

I just had a new camcorder arrive and once I learn how to use it, I'll take a road trip and do some filming.

Jim Morse

1 year ago

Report Abuse

I was curious so I just took a road trip w/o the camcorder. As usual, I wish I had it with me. I went down Emerson and at Main St. there was a car in front of me with the left directional on. I groaned. Now that Emerson is a two way at the beginning, you have to look to your left, look across the street and look to your right all at the same time. You have cars coming at you from three directions and bikers and pedestrians popping up on your right without much warning. In the old days, when it was a one-way you could go out to the middle of the street and you had a lot better vision.

Navigating this intersection at 3:37 PM is not for the weak. I have seen people wait there until there is no one coming in either direction. This driver was brave. She started inching out and a Mirak truck was kind enough to stop and let her go. In this position, you have an obstructed view and can't see the cars coming down Main from the left, in the left lane. These cars are barreling down Main towards Mystic Ave. They can't see you either. If you drive right through, there is a good chance that you will be broadsided.

Years ago, a friend of mine was in the left lane on Main heading south in the rain and a bus driver who had stopped to let passengers out, waved my friend on signaling him to pass the bus. The bus driver did not see the elderly gentleman who had just gotten off the bus and was crossing the street. It was a fatal mistake.
Back to today, a little car in the left lane stopped to let the woman go. I scooted out to the right while the cars behind the Mirak truck and the little car sat on their horns. They were probably wondering why these two vehicles had stopped. I made a note to film this intersection someday.

In South Medford I found that Bowdoin, Princeton, Yale, Dartmouth, Radcliffe, Colby, Benton, Bradford, Berwick, Wellesley, Charleston, Sterling, Renfrew, Fleming, Hinsdale, Windsor, Frederick, Stanley and Pearl are all pp! College Ave has parking on one side from Gantcher up to the driveway at the bridge. There is no parking on either side of College Ave from Windsor to George.

I was surprised that so much of the area has gone pp but the biggest surprise was that Stearns Ave hasn't! It also was the only street around with no where to park. There were about 10 spots reserved with barrels and cones and there was not one free space.

Stanley Ave had about 12 free spaces and Frederick Ave had about 30 free spots. I would like to find out why Stearns has not converted yet. The next street after Pearl is George St. I would say that Stearns and George are where people would park for a T stop on College Ave.

Bill R.
1 year ago
Report Abuse

jim, I have to be honest with you... I still don't get what you are saying. maybe I never will. I don't understand why you say traffic and permit parking are two separate things when one mitigates the other when you are talking about commuting to a T stop. you say that people walk until there isn't permit parking... okay, I get that, but why don't you just extend permit parking to those areas, maybe to all of medford until it becomes too inconvenient for commuters to do that? if there's one thing you can guarantee in the US, is that Americans will always do what's easiest. why not be an advocate for that instead of being opposed to a plan which could have substantial benefits for everyone in medford? I understand that there are negatives, but I would hope you would agree that there are many positives too and those warrant exploring.

you have your opinion. that's cool with me. but I don't see the logic. I think most people in medford would be happy to have the green line extended as far as possible into medford as long as there are good mitigation measures. I agree that traffic is an issue in medford, but it's a problem now and it's not getting any better. stagnation is not good for medford. i hope you would agree to that.

doing nothing is not an option. I've never heard of any issue, large or small, where 100% agree on something and that's why there's compromise. this is a case, I believe, that compromise will work and make medford a better place.

Mike C
1 year ago
Report Abuse

I understand that the Green Line extension was a promise made in order to get the approvals to do the Big Dig. At the time the cost of the Big Dig was in the 2 billion range and eventually ballooned to 15-16 billion. The Federal Government was supposed to pay 80% of the cost but got so fed up with the constant cost escalation that they capped it and low and behold we will be paying for decades. My ultimate concern about moving forward with the Green Line extension is the cost. I have read estimates of between 300 million to 450 million just to build it. Given the track record of the Commonwealth in trying to get these huge projects built I would venture an educated guess that it will probably go much higher. If the Green Line gets extended to Medford does the cost of building it justify the usage that is projected? I have no problem with people advocating for public transit projects and I understand that there are needs for expansion, but at the end of the day the taxpayer foots the bill regardless of whether the money is federal, state or local. So in closing, as a taxpayer I hope the dialogue continues, with all sides having a fair chance to voice their opinions in an open forum and that the final judgement, whatever it is, will provide Medford and those of us who choose to live here with the absolute best result.

Brenda Larkin
1 year ago
Report Abuse

I just moved to Medford with my husband who is attending graduate school at Tufts. I was born in Oakland, CA, moved to Chicago when I was a teenager and then we came to Medford, which, incidentally, is a very nice town.

Trains in urban neighborhoods attract traffic? Huh? I think most people who have ever had a close relationship with subway transportation know that that statement is a sort of bumpkin view of how public transportation works. You build it, disallow parking and those who ride the train get themselves to it and those who do not simply drive.
People have said with great self-confidence that a train would lead to local traffic pile ups because commuters will be dropped off at the train station by some other person. This strikes me as foolishly archaic. Most rush hour traffic consists of cars with only one person in them (look around you in the morning!), and who in the world is lucky enough to have someone at home (usually envisioned to be woman, of course) who will serve as a personal chauffeur!?! Not to condemn the conversation above because I think it's at least civil, but why are you having it at all? It seems predicated on some pretty shaky assumptions and it sometimes presents train transportation (which I totally support) to be a panacea. It is not, but it is a mighty critical piece of an overall solution to problems as we now know them. Learn from other cities and move onward.

BL
Jim Morse
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Well Brenda welcome to Medford. We are having this conversation because the Executive Office of Transportation has advanced to the stage where they are asking us for input which will help to determine the final location of the Medford station(s) among other things. Each possible site in Medford, and there are about seven of them from Harvard Street and all the way to Rt. 16, presents a wide range of different concerns. Traffic is just one of many concerns. Ken published most of the concerns in the other blog and here's a copy:

- Land taking/ eminent domain
- Increased noise, vibration and pollution from moving the commuter rail tracks closer to peoples’ homes
- Loss of trees in rail corridor
- Increase in car traffic and pickup/drop-off congestion
- Parking by non-neighborhood residents who would come in to take the T
- Construction and siting of a power supply facility
- Imposition of a maintenance facility in Medford
- Increase in the city’s assessment from the MBTA
- Creating a venue for homeless people to congregate
- Making neighborhoods feel more urban and less suburban
- Impact of construction, including rebuilding existing bridges over the tracks
- Effect on property values, both during construction and afterward
- Gentrification
- Displacement of low- to moderate income residents
- Impact on Walking Court public housing complex
- Maintenance responsibility, including snow removal
- Impact on any wetlands in the area and the Mystic River
- Rodent control, during construction and afterward
- Increase in crime

We don't have to go to other cities to learn about 'Smart Growth' projects because we have one still growing right here in Medford - Station Landing at Wellington Circle. The 300 or so cars that park in the Orange line lot fill it up around 8:30 AM. They have a terrific drop off area and I have used it many times along with hundreds of others. For the rest of the day, and into the night, the traffic going through here is worse than it's ever been in 50 years. Part of the increase in traffic is from all the restaurants, Kelly's Roast Beef, the shops, and the hundreds of people who live here who also have cars! It is not just the T that has caused the increase!

One other factor that must be considered is that one of these stop(s) will be the end of the line station (terminus) and history has taught us that people more than half a mile away will not walk to this facility but will drive. You also can look at the West Medford Commuter Rail stop which draws motorists from many of the surrounding cities like Arlington, Belmont and Winchester. The Riverside Green Line station in Newton is a terminus and off the top of my head I think that they have parking for 890 cars.

Ken Krause
1 year ago
Report Abuse
There is very little 'Smart' about what has been and continues to take place at Station Landing. I would term it 'transit-oriented overdevelopment;' and it's minimally transit-oriented at best, because as Jim noted, most of the visitors to the area drive there, making a horrific traffic situation that much worse.
There is minimal opportunity for 'smart growth' along the Green Line extension, and virtually none in Medford; the city is essentially built out. Most of the open development parcels are in Somerville and Cambridge. In Medford, there is opportunity for redevelopment and some new housing at Ball Square, and perhaps at Rt. 16, on a very small scale, if the line goes that far.

I think it's also important to note that the EOT, while trying to foster economic development and growth of housing and retail, is essential responsible for building the transit extension. Any other development or 'growth' in retail, housing, etc., is up to the land owners, the cities and private developers to initiate and plan, or choose not to do, and with full participation from the citizens. (Speaking of that, how many 'civic engagement' meetings do you remember being held on Station Landing? Has there been any?)

Finally, it's not germane to compare Riverside Station with its large parking lot to the terminus station on this end of the line, wherever it may end up. It already has been stated numerous times by the EOT and EOEA that there will be no parking provided, other than a few spots for MBTA personnel.

The 'stations,' which will be essentially platforms, will more closely resemble a stop such as in Newton Corner.

http://www.lightrail.com/photos/boston/boston27.jpg

Jim Morse
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Ken, you are as slippery as a Mystic River eel :) Station Landing is most certainly a Smart Growth project!

Read this. (Station Landing)..'The project received a Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2006 Smart Growth Award and was cited as being an outstanding local and national model for smart growth design.'

Here's the link...


huh
1 year ago
Report Abuse

Doesn't matter if Wellington is or isn't an example of smart growth, Ken's saying that it's irrelevant here in Medford with respect to the Green line, as there's very little land to develop. Stop trying to confuse the issues.

Reading over your list of train negatives to Brenda, this is what I read: 'I am a scared, middle-aged man who doesn't rely on public transportation. My house is near the train tracks already. I'm generally worried about the rate of change I see happening in Medford, and the train is just one more thing.'

Thing is, this train is coming, like it or not. Our best collective strategy as a community at this point would be to unite in order to negotiate the best mitigation we can for those affected by the train. The time to bitch about the train coming was about 15 years ago, when you might've been able to do something about it.

A lot of Medfordians in fact want this train to come, and it will help a lot of people and, I believe, the city as a whole.

Jim Morse
1 year ago
Report Abuse

Telling the truth doesn't matter?

Mike C.
1 year ago
Report Abuse

'Time to bitch about the train coming was about 15 years ago, when you might've been able to do something about it.' I would hope that this statement is wrong only because I believe it is never too late to step back and re think a massive undertaking such as this. While the public and political momentum may be full throttle with proceeding, there is always room for intelligent dissent in light of past public projects in this State that have turned out to be fiscal folly for the taxpayers. I also believe that while it may be inevitable that the Green Line does get extended to Medford, that the need for a full and open debate with regard to potential problems should occur. Just because one expresses concerns or doubts doesn't mean they don't understand the needs, but if this project is going to come to Medford, let's make sure it is
Mass transit options absolutely reduce traffic. Over 500,000 people use the MBTA each day. Can you imagine if all of those people chose to drive instead? It would be total gridlock everywhere.

Medford is growing and traffic has and is getting much worse. One way to help reduce traffic is to provide people with other options, i.e. the Green Line Extension. Sure Medford has public transportation already, but it is generally slow and/or inconvenient.

The stations don't need to have parking. Both Cambridge and Somerville have permit parking throughout much of the cities, and heavily restrict long-term parking around T stations. It works quite well at keeping out-of-town commuter from driving in.

It is well past the point of IF the Green Line is coming. It has been discussed ad naseum for almost 20 years, and the decision has been made. It's a question of the details now. Trying to block the project is just selfish as far as I'm concerned. The best thing to do is work with the city, the state, and your neighbors to ensure that your concerns about potential impacts are addressed. In the end, I'm confident that everyone will benefit from the Green Line, even those who don't use it.

Fear-Mongering 101

Actually, Jim Morse doesn't live near the proposed Green Line corridor, unless you feel 1/2 a mile close. He will be impacted minimally, if at all. He's a self-described NIMBYite, so I wouldn't look to any of his arguments against the extension for any logic.

I am a resident of the Hillside for over 50 years and have lived on Charnwood Road for 30 years. I am not opposed or for an extention of the Green Line if it does not impact my neighborhood or if it ends at College Ave.

I just do not want it in my backyard.

I would expect that those who live closer would still be opposed.

I am concerned for the people like me who live on this street or the other streets impacted, who may be asked to give up their yard, or the buffer zone between their yard and the proposed rail expansion.

That buffer zone is something I have always enjoyed especially during the warmer days when I can enjoy being out in my backyard or on my deck and not having to see trains speed by. The 'Green' covers it up pretty well and without it I would feel confined.

A backyard BBQ would not be a pleasant experience as it once was if this expansion goes through.

Pets and wildlife would be impacted by construction and land taking.

In 30 years on this street, I know of many people who have lost a cat or dog to the train.

I do not want my property to be devalued by this expansion. I think it would be.

Most of the residents who live on the rail side of Charnwood Rd are already used to the noise from the trains that have been there for years. No one really complains, unless there is a freight train traveling at high speed.

Building a sound barrier may help control noise, but there would be much more noise. How could it be eliminated?

Traffic in the neighborhood would be more of a problem.

Everyone who lives on Charnwood is aware that students or employees of Tufts park on this street often. Sometimes they even leave their vehicles in front of homes for days or weeks while they travel back to their homes in states where they are from. This happens a lot.

Boston Ave or Wintrop Street does not have any additional parking especially with the number of students and businesses that are there.

Permit parking may help but the street is subject to one sided street parking during the winter months and this is a bigger problem than the people that park that are not residents. Where would all of the people park if we did have PP? The street is also 2 way which sometimes allows people who avoid the traffic at Boston Ave and Winthrop to speed down our street.
adding danger to the young. 
If someone cares to look, many mothers have already posted signs to get drivers to slow down or be more careful. 

Many of my neighbors are either young families with children who would be at risk or who are aging like myself. Is this what I can expect for my upcoming retirement to be subjected to more noise and pollution and face the fact that the home I have lived in is not worth what it once was?

becky
1 year ago

Report Abuse

dan, do you know how much more noise and pollution a green line vehicle would produce? can you quantify it?

the problem with all the faults you see in the green line extension is that they can all be easily mitigated, you even mention some of those mitigation measures. but you dismiss them based on unsupported facts.

there is no need to continue to keep people in Medford at a disadvantage because of easily remedied issues. we can all grow as a community, deal with issues and adapt or we can ignore the realities of living in the world and regress. I’m choosing to adapt and grow and I’m absolutely positive most residents of Medford would do the same.

Frank
1 year ago

Report Abuse

Jim Morse: I find it very strange and curiously contrarian, your attitude (and other who are similarly strident against the Green Line), because so little of it is based upon real, factual realities. If they were proposing a power or sewage plant or a prison of some sort, I could understand really legitimate concern. In cities all over the U.S. and even moreso around the world in the great cities of Europe, Asia, etc., it is considered a civilized, positive, necessary thing to have a subway or trolley stop within close distance to one’s home. Medford is neither the central city (Midtown or downtown Boston or Cambridge) nor is it the plush suburbs (Lincoln, Concord, Wellesley, etc.) You can’t walk to a lot of necessary things in Medford easily nor does most of Medford have the feel of a leafy, sparse, upscale suburban getaway. Much of Medford is a densely packed city. The citizens of Medford deserve bigtime MITIGATION for many aspects of this situation- most notable an absence of many good services along with BAD traffic along crowded roadways in many directions from the city. People complain on the Yahoo Group about buses that are late or don’t show up. Medfordites who work downtown say they have to now commute by CAR. This is unacceptable when a Green Line extension is now being offered us by the government. Your neighbors deserve an easy, clean, quick commute into town. Some bus rides to the trains (Wellington, Davis, West Medford) can be very unreliable and take a half hour or more. This is NOT the best a city like Boston (‘The Athens of America’) can do in the year 2008. Here is a list of your stated problems with Green Line and my responses to them. - Land taking/eminent domain (THERE MAY OR MAY NOT BE MUCH EMINENT TAKING- DO WE KNOW? AT WORST CASE, WILL A FEW PEOPLE GET MARKET VALUE OR MORE FOR THEIR PROPERTIES THEN?)

- Increased noise, vibration and pollution from moving the commuter rail tracks closer to peoples’ homes (NOISE- NO. GO TO BROOKLINE OR NEWTON. THE G.L. CARS MAKE A RATHER PLEASANT LIGHT HUM. MULTI MILLION DOLLAR HOMES ABUT THE G.L. TRACKS IN THOSE TOWNS. G.L. CARS MAKE LESS NOISE THAN THE EXISTING COMMUTER RAIL. VIBRATION- NOPE. VERY LIGHT WITH THE G.L., REALLY NOT AN ISSUE. POLLUTION? YOU'RE JOKING. THEY ARE ELECTRIC TRAINS. THEY MAKE ZERO POLLUTION- LESS THAN THE EXISTING C.R. AND CARS, BUSES, ETC. AS FOR MOVING C.R. CLOSER TO PEOPLE’S HOMES, WHAT BY A FEW FEET? WHEN THEY PUT UP PLEXIGLASS SEPARATORS THE NET EFFECTS WILL BE EVEN BETTER THAN BEFORE.

- Loss of trees in rail corridor - PERHAPS A FEW TREES. I AM A HUGE, GIGANTIC SUPPORTER OF TREES IN MEDFORD, MCSTAG, TRYING TO STOP MEDFORD FROM CUTTING DOWN TREES AND GETTING THEM TO PLANT MORE NEW ONES. IF A FEW GOT CUT DOWN FOR SUCH A TREMENDOUSLY POSITIVE PROJECT IT THINK THE NET EFFECT WILL STILL BE EXTREMELY POSITIVE.

- Increase in car traffic and pickup/drop-off congestion - NOT NECESSARILY TRUE. DOESN'T HAPPEN AT ALL MBTA STOPS. ALSO NEGATED BY CARS THAT NOW WONT DRIVE ALL THE WAY THROUGH MEDFORD AND SOMERVILLE COMMUTING BOTH WAYS.

- Parking by non-neighborhood residents who would come in to take the T - EASY. PERMIT PARKING. ALMOST EVERY OTHER TOWN HAS SOME PERMIT AREAS, SO MEDFORD CAN TOO.

- Construction and siting of a power supply facility - HOW DO YOU KNOW, AND IF SO, SO WHAT? MEDFORD ALREADY HAS BIG INDUSTRIAL/RETAIL AREAS AND WAREHOUSES, ETC., SO WHY IS A SMALL FACILITY ON AN APPROPRIATELY ZONED PARCEL A DEAL BREAKER? IT IS NOT

- Imposition of a maintenance facility in Medford- SEE ABOVE

- Increase in the city’s assessment from the MBTA- WHAT ARE THE NUMBERS JIM? HMMMMM...QUINCY, BRAINTREE, REVERE, MILTON, BROOKLINE, NEWTON, CAMBRIDGE, SOMERVILLE, AND ALMOST
EVERY PART OF BOSTON SEEM TO HANDLE THESE ASSESSMENTS. WHAT IS IT A FEW DOLLARS A YEAR PER RESIDENT?
- Creating a venue for homeless people to congregate- OK, THIS IS WHERE YOU ARE MAKING UP PURE CRAZY FANTASY SCENARIOS. THIS ISN'T BERKELY CA OR AUSTIN TX. HOMELESS PEOPLE DON'T HANG OUT IN FREEZING CLIMATES AND ESPECIALLY NOT IN QUIET SUBURBS WITH ALMOST NO BUSY BUSINESS STRIPS AND WITH A DEARTH OF LIBERAL STREETWALKING SHOPPERS WHO WOULD GIVE THEM MONEY. WHAT ALTERNATIVE REALITY PLANET DO YOU LIVE ON? SOUNDS INTERESTING.
- Making neighborhoods feel more urban and less suburban- I TOTALLY DISAGREE. MAKING NEIGHBORHOODS FEEL LESS STULTIFYING AND BORING AND MORE VIBRANT, DYNAMIC AND WITH ACCESS TO A GOOD CUP OF COFFEE, NICE MEAL THAT'S NOT SLICE OF PIZZA OR 1940'S MEATLOAF. MEDFORD AIN'T DOVER OR LEXINGTON SO IT MIGHT AS WELL BE A LITTLE MORE DAVIS SQUARE OR ARLINGTON CENTER. ARLINGTON IS A VERY BEAUTIFUL TOWN FULL OF GREAT RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS AND THEY HAVE SOME OF THIS HORRIBLE 'PROGRESS' AND 'VITALITY' THAT YOU AND OTHER REACTIONARY WAY OLDS SCHOOL TYPES SEEM TO HATE SO MUCH.
- Impact of construction, including rebuilding existing bridges over the tracks- ARE YOU GOING TO HAVE TO GET DOWN THERE AND DO THE DIGGING AND HAMMERING YOURSELF, JIM? I DOUBT IT. WHY DONT YOU LET THE WELL PAID UNION WORKERS WORRY ABOUT THE HARD WORK. AS FOR IMPACT, THERE IS ALSO IMPACT WHEN MEDFORD PAVES THE ROADS, DOES WIRES, POLES, VARIOUS REPAIRS, ETC. THE IMPACT WILL AT LEAST BE CONTAINED IN A DEEP GROOVE IN THE GROUND.
- Effect on property values, both during construction and afterward- YES. YOU ARE CORRECT. EVERYONE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE WILL UNFORTUNATELY HAVE THEIR HOUSE VALUE GO UP. ONLY IN THE BIZARRO PLANET YOU LIVE IN- WHERE HOMELESS PEOPLE CONGREGATE IN THE WARM, BOUNTIFUL, FREE-MONEY&MEAL PARADISE OF MEDFORD DO HOUSING PRICES GO DOWN WHEN MBTA STOPS COME IN.
- Gentrification- WELL, IF YOU MEAN A GREATER INFUX OF EDUCATED, DIVERSE, PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE WHO MIGHT LIKE TO HAVE SOME MORE SHOPS, FOOD PLACES, BETTER SCHOOLS, ETC., HMMMMM... TO ME THAT SOUNDS LIKE A 'REALLY GOOD THING.' KIND OF WHAT MOST TOWNS AROUND BOSTON SHOOT FOR. GUESS WE JUST HAVE DIFFERENT TASTES THERE.
- Displacement of low- to moderate income residents- HOW DO THEY GET DISPLACED IF THEY OWN THEIR HOMES? ARMED COSSACKS WHO POUR OUT OF THE GREEN LINE TRAINS AND EXPEL THEM? IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT RENTS GOING UP, WELL THAT HAPPENS IN EVERY TOWN AND CITY EVERYWHERE. CAN I AFFORD TO LIVE IN BEACON HILL OR BACK BAY OR WEST CAMBRIDGE? NO. BUT NOBODY'S BOO-HOOING FOR ME. AND DOESN'T THIS CONTRADICT YOUR FANTASY OF HOUSING VALUES GOING DOWN?
- Impact on Walking Court public housing complex- ONCE AGAIN, DO YOU EVEN KNOW ANY FACTS ABOUT THIS? TELL ME SPECIFICS, BLUEPRINTS, ETC. AT WORST IF ONE HOUSING COMPLEX HAS TO GET RELOCATED i THINKS ITS TOTALLY WORTH IT TO MITIGATE HORRIBLE TRAFFIC CONDITIONS THAT CAN RUIN THOUSANDS OF TAX PAYING CITIZENS' LIVES.
- Maintenance responsibility, including snow removal- THE MBTA CLEARS ITS OWN TRACKS. YOU ARE SEARCHING UNDER EVERY OBSCURE ROCK TO FIND NONEXISTENT REASONS AGAINST THE TRAIN.
- Impact on any wetlands in the area and the Mystic River- WHY WILL A TRAIN THAT NOW DOES NOT EVEN GO (IN THE PLAN) TO THE RIVER EFFECT WETLANDS?
- Rodent control, during construction and afterward- I DONT THINK YOUR HOUSE WILL BE OVERRUN BY RATS. SOME WILL PROBABLY SCURRY OUT DURING THE PROCESS BUT THEY WILL THEN DISAPPEAR AND BIGGER CITIES WITH MUCH BIGGER RAT PROBLEMS HAVE LIVED THROUGH MUCH WORSE. ONCE AGAIN, A LITTLE OBSCURE AND TRANSPARENTLY NITPICKY, JIM. THEY CAN ALSO PUT OUT RAT POISON IF IT BOthers THAT MUCH.
- Increase in crime OK, ABSOLUTE TOTAL AND COMPLETE BULL DOO DOO. WOULD BE LAUGHABLE IF IT WASN'T POSSIBLE THAT SUCH A CROCK OF BS MIGHT BE BELIVED GBY THE IGNORANT AND THE PREJUDICED. CRIMINALS DO NOT- I REPEAT DO NOT- GET ON TRAINS TO SUBURBS, GET OFF AND COMMIT CRIMES. CRIMINALS DRIVE CARS SO THEY HAVE A GETWAY. OR THEY'RE STREET PUNKS ALREADY WALKING DISTANCE TO THEIR CRIME LOCATION. OR THEY RIDE BIKES. MEDFORD IS NOT A TARGET FOR STREET CRIMINALS FROM OUTSIDE OF MEDFORD. ASK ANY TOWN WITH MBTA STOPS IF THEIR STATISTICS SHOW AN INCREASE IN CRIME FROM THE EXISTENCE OF THE MBTA STOPS. CRIME DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY. NO CRIMINAL WANTS TO HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE T TO FLEE THE SCENE OF A BREAK-IN, POCKPOCKETING, MUGGING, ETC, POSSIBLY LUGGING A TV SET OR CAMCORDER, WAITING ON AN EXPOSED, WELL LIT PLATFORM, ETC. PLEASE THINK THROUGH YOUR PARANOID, FANTASTICAL, REACTIONARY NON-ARGUMENTS. YOU REALLY MADE ME HAVE TO TYPE A LOT.
JIM MORSE HAS MADE THE ISSUE REALLY CLEAR. GIVE OR TAKE, IN MEDFORD THE GREEN LINE...
ISSUE COMES DOWN TO THIS: OLD, CALCIFIED, REACTIONARY, FRIGHTENED OF PROGRESS, HATING OF 'EDUMUCATIONAL, SLICKSTER TYPES' WHO LIKE STARBUCKS AND BOOKSTORES AND A VIBRANT SHOPPING AREA AND A MORE DIVERSE MEDFORD- AND THE PEOPLE WHO THESE REACTIONARY CAVEPEOPLE THINK REPRESENT THAT- THE GREEN LINE SUPPORTERS. LET'S PUT IT OUT ON THE TABLE FOLKS- IT COMES DOWN TO 1940'S (MAYBE 50'S) VS. 2008.

Janet
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Frank may be bit of a perturbed writer at times, but he is absolutely right. I moved here from West Roxbury and I like a lot of things here, but this hard-headed attitude against progress and the subway trains kind of surprises me. I am going to do everything I can to help bring the Green Line to Medford.
Meeting tomorrow at city hall re: Green Line!

1 year ago
Report Abuse
Fran, Jim's real issues with this project may be a bit difficult to follow at times. I personally think some of his arguments are just posed to build up opposition, but you seriously need to chill out a bit. He does have some points and he also is representative of a certain view point with in the community. We need to constructively deal with the issues and the problems which people see. There is no great conspiracy on either side and this isn't war of the worlds or anything.

Sit back and take a deep breath. This whole planning process is going to take a little while, and you're all going to have a stroke before it's over if you're not careful.

Gerard
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Yes, Chris. Jim does share certain 'points of view' with people in the community. But not all 'points of view' are equal. Some people hold the 'point of view' that we should teach kids that the Earth was created 6,000 years ago in the snap of a finger, that darker races are inferior primates and that the Tooth Fairy is a living breathing person. Were those viewpoints to be espoused loudly and publicy with the intention of affecting public policy, they would be-rightfully-loudly and firmly opposed and shouted down in communities of reasonable and educated people. I, like Frank, have extremely little patience for reactionary, mean-spirited, anti-progressive people who would sabotage this community where I live and pay taxes.

Fear Of Change
1 year ago
Report Abuse
I see a pattern in these discussions and I have read an observation made by a few individuals that I think is very astute and telling. And that is a general fear on the part of Green Line opponents of change in the city of Medford. Change is necessary. Change is ultimately inevitable. Change is what every successful city or town has to do, especially if there are areas that don't work optimally and need improvement, i.e. the public transportation. The opponents are far more dishonest than the proponents in their arguments and they also have weird hidden agendas.

Matt
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Interesting discussion here, and like some others have mentioned, I'm glad that for the most part it's civil on both sides, and am optimistic that the project can move forward with acceptable compromises on both sides. For around a year I shared a similar experience to the person who rides the 94. All I really have to add is that I moved to Porter/Davis, and the Red Line is an absolute joyride compared to the 80.

Brenda Larkin
1 year ago
Report Abuse
I appreciate Mr. Morse's greeting me to Medford, and I thank him for it. What I didn't need was to be brought up to speed on what has been happening on the Green Line issue. Between taking care of my children, getting stuck in traffic jams to and from work and actually getting my work done (don't worry there are lots of us in this club), I do keep relatively up to date on the Green Line - which is quite an easy thing to do between web posts, newspaper accounts and
conversations with my neighbors.

Anyway, it is unfortunate that Mr. Morse first ignored the meat of my statement on his mythology of one's being driven to urban subway stations by some unknown (probably female) driver; and then provided me with a wholly inaccurate lecture-ette on Smart Growth. In doing this he laid one mythology on top of another. Done properly all 'Smart Growth' means is weaving together parts of an existing community through well-planned, thoughtful and sound development. People can call anything 'smart' but what you mentioned is not.

I have noted that, in addition to the mythology of being driven to subway stops, many people who are against the Green Line not only overtly deny that they are against it, but also use the term 'Smart Growth' as though they know what it is. Did you know that the approach to development is preferred by many communities of color, low-income neighborhoods, people with disabilities and neighborhoods cut off from economic development opportunities across the country? It is 'smart' because it is sensitive and responsive to existing community conditions and needs, and works to eliminate the needs without eliminating the community.

I would like to add one thing here. As a result of Smart Growth development in Oakland, my mother, who lost her vision at the age of 43, was able to get from her house, to BART and over to San Francisco every day to work. All this was possible because a) BART existed 2) it was accessible 3) the connecting public transportation to BART was built out to encourage people to take BART and 3) my mother is amazing.

I don't know if you know your mythologies are simply that - mythologies - but they really aren't helpful. There are tons of issues to be addressed before a final determination can be made on the Green Line, why make up additional ones? If the train succeeds or fails, its fate should be based on facts.

BL
M. Russoniello
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Does Jim Morse ever sleep? It seems he never stops typing.
Christine Bennett
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Wow, here we go again! Name calling never solves anything.

It is my personal opinion that ALL Medford citizens need to have full OPEN dialogue with all parties, have full disclosure of any and all reports (environmental etc.), and be given appropriate time for questions, concerns, and DIRECT answers, make an INFORMED decision. Medford citizens, until a large uproar at a Somerville meeting held in October of 2005, were not being presented with any of this information. To downplay the concern of direct abutters is not really fair, their voices absolutely need to be heard.

Up until recently, full reports have not been done, and there were many proposals; although none of these were written in stone. To make a determination that no type of terminus will happen in Medford is quite ill informed.

As far as I have been informed, the proposed Green Line Extension has not been fully determined. In questioning the various areas that have been mentioned above, provides the beginning of a mitigation process that shouldn't be prevented by name calling.

The proposed GreenLine Extension project should be a thoroughly discussed issue, as its impact will be with us for years to come. In order to make an informed decision, people should be provided with the full details of said proposal, and have an adequate amount of time to digest the information and come to their own conclusion.

Not everyone who is questioning the way this proposal has been presented to Medford Citizens is living in 'fear,' or unwilling to have 'change' within this city; many are trying to see that all issues are presented, discussed, and ensure that all people who will be directly impacted are allowed to have their voices heard.

Lives in Medford
1 year ago
Report Abuse
Adam/ Frank
- Increased noise, vibration and pollution from moving the commuter rail tracks closer to peoples' homes (NOISE- NO. GO TO BROOKLINE OR NEWTON. THE G.L. CARS MAKE A RATHER PLEASANT LIGHT HUM. MULTI

You totally missed the point. It is a concern of abutters because the COMMUTER RAIL tracks will move closer to the north side along the track bed (other side of Boston Ave). This is a mitigation issue. And yes we all know how much quieter the GL is. But apparently you don't understand mitigation issues of a closer COMMUTER RAIL. Provide facts....

1 year ago
Report Abuse
How much closer will the commuter rail tracks be... 5 feet, 3 feet? Can you say definitively? Will this make any difference when those trains already go by?

Seems to me, you are spouting off about something that can't be proven, unless you can provide some specifics...
Chris
1 year ago
Report Abuse
The determination of how much closer the commuter tracks will be has not yet been made. It is a very legitimate concern, and something which must be looked at. Specifics are a bit short right now, which I believe is what leaves people on edge. People don't know what the state's full intentions are. I don't think you can dismiss that as easily as some have.

There is the view out there that some land taking will be needed in people's back yards in order to fit in the green line. EOT hasn't made any effort to deny this, which only fuels the questions. It seems that they don't want to rule anything out, for fear of losing choices. I personally think this is a mistake. They really need to define the problem better right now to let people know what they are up against.

In Medford, due to the configuration of things, people's yards are typically on what will become the commuter rail side of the action, so the commuter rail line may be pushed right up to people's property line. If that happens it will be a very significant change for people who live there. Typically people have a small, but very important buffer of trees between them and the rails. I don't know if you have heard a commuter train up close. It is quite a shocking sound.

I say all of this as someone who is very hopeful that the Green line can come to Medford. I will actively use public transit and I live in easy walking distance to several of the proposed stations. I think there are ways to solve most of these problems, but EOT will need to be creative and see them as a top priority. If they don't, the resistance they hit may be very strong and we will miss out on a very unique opportunity.

Jim
1 year ago
Report Abuse
As pointed out before, there is a simple solution to any potential noise issues.... sound barriers. They have been used before and can be used again.

I don't think anyone is being dismissive of that, but people are pointing out that no one knows if that will be an issue right now because they haven't even surveyed the area and if it is a problem, it can be remedied fairly easily. Why get worked up about a hypothetical?
I don't get it
1 year ago
Report Abuse
People consistently cite traffic issues and a rise in home prices as reasons against the T, but that's happening in town without the T. Some things are beyond our control. Oh, wait -- if we have a T line and enforced parking regulations, that would go a long way towards a reduction in traffic...
Login or register to post a comment:
MEDFORD

Green Line extension divides city

Green Line seen as boon or bane

By Eric Moskowitz, Globe Staff | January 27, 2008

Knowing what the Red Line extension did for Davis Square, Somerville officials and residents have pressed hard to bring the Green Line to Union Square and up through the city. Community members have packed project meetings, wearing green glow-stick necklaces and "Got T?" buttons to show their support.

But in Medford, where the line would end, people are divided. Some see the extension the same way that those in Somerville do, as a chance to enhance their neighborhoods, raise property values, and connect with the region. Others contend that property values would decline - or, if not, that gentrification brought by the T would price longtime residents out of Medford. Many worry that the state would seize land to build the project and are concerned that outsiders trying to catch the T would jam already crowded city streets. They disagree about where the line should end, and whether it should enter Medford at all.

Most of all, many in Medford feel they haven't had a say in a looming project that could change their community significantly. Underscored by tension over whether Medford is, or should be, more like Somerville or more like western neighbor Arlington, those feelings poured forth at a standing-room-only meeting at Medford City Hall Wednesday night. State officials came to the city to explain the Green Line extension and seek input as they finalize the route and station locations.

With 200 in attendance, some cheered when people declared support for the Green Line, as Medford resident and real estate agent Elizabeth Bolton did. "The thought of the T coming to Medford is just an amazing and fabulous opportunity," said Bolton, who touted the MBTA-enabled transformation of Cambridge's Porter Square, where she used to live. "It's life-changing."

Louder applause went to those who said they liked aspects of the project but would oppose physical, noise, or visual impacts, as Mayor Michael J. McGlynn did when he vowed to fight eminent-domain takings or an attempt to put a Green Line maintenance yard in Medford.

Still, the loudest applause went to those who voiced frustration and said Medford residents had been given little chance to provide input to a project that seemed ordained by officials elsewhere. "It sounds to me as if it's almost carved in granite," said Gwen Blackburn, a West Medford resident who drew multiple ovations. "I'm concerned that we may not even have a voice as to what goes in our city at all."

Stephen M. Woelfel, the lead state official for the project, tried to reassure the crowd that the details are still being developed, with plenty of time for input.

"We're trying to make this project work for everyone," said Woelfel, manager of statewide transit planning for the Executive Office of Transportation, which oversees the Green Line extension; when complete, the project will be owned and operated by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. "We're in the beginning of the process."

Planners have talked about extending the Green Line beyond East Cambridge for nearly half a century, though the state did not commit to the project until 1990, when it pledged to make multiple transit improvements to
avoid a lawsuit from the Conservation Law Foundation threatening to block the Big Dig highway project. A state transit-improvement plan, required because Massachusetts failed to meet federal Clean Air Act standards, filed the next year promised that the Green Line would be extended to Ball Square in Somerville or Tufts University in Medford by the end of 2011.

Nonetheless, the state largely ignored the project, as Big Dig costs soared above $14 billion. But pressure from the Conservation Law Foundation, Somerville officials, and others brought the Green Line extension back to the fore. The state negotiated for an extension through 2014. Then officials last summer said the project may be delayed two more years while they seek federal funding for half the estimated cost of $600 million. But in a sign of commitment in November, Governor Deval Patrick proposed a bond bill calling for the state to borrow enough money to complete the project, whether or not the federal funds come through.

Meanwhile, the Executive Office of Transportation has been refining the project. In 2004-05, the transportation office conducted a project study and analysis of alternatives, such as new commuter rail stops or a Silver Line-style bus, that incorporated public input and solidified the basic plan to run the Green Line through Somerville and into Medford on streetcars alongside the commuter rail. In late 2006, the transportation office formally notified state environmental officials about the project, and the secretary of environmental affairs responded with a 16-page certificate that established the work and analysis the transportation office would need to perform for an environmental impact report.

That's where the project stands. The office is working on the report, which will incorporate public input and answer a host of important questions, such as where the stations would go, what they would look like, what the noise and visual effects would be, and what land would be needed to accommodate the expanded railroad right-of-way. The state's top environmental official also called for the project to be completed in a way that maximizes transit and environmental benefits and enhances the character of the project's communities.

In the process, the transportation office will also decide whether the extension should end at Tufts or continue through Medford's Hillside neighborhood to Route 16 and the Mystic River. It will also evaluate how best to route the T to Union Square.

Some in Medford believe the community should have already reached a consensus on the project, for the sake of self-advocacy.

The City Council last week approved a resolution calling on the mayor to hire a full-time planner to focus on the Green Line and seek state funds.

"Somerville is driving the bus on this, and Medford should at least be copiloting somewhere along the way, and have a unified voice about what we want," said City Councilor Frederick N. Dello Russo, who leads the council's transportation subcommittee. ■

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Medford still split on the merits of a Green Line extension

By Rob Barry

Tue Jan 29, 2008, 02:27 PM EST

Medford - As the planning and surveying stage of the Green Line Extension draws closer to an end, residents gathered in Medford City Hall last week to make their feelings on the project known to state and local officials. A general information meeting was held Jan. 23 to open discussion with people who might be affected. The meeting kicked off a two-week period of neighborhood workshops and public comment ary.

After a slideshow update from Executive Office of Transportation (EOT), city officials and residents brought forward their questions and concerns on eminent domain, parking, the line’s terminus or endpoint and where to put a necessary maintenance facility.

“We’re not Somerville,” said Mayor Michael McGlynn, who attended last Wednesday. “We don’t have a Union Square. We have an area that’s going through an entirely residential area.”

Still in the planning stages, the terminus of the project has yet to be determined, though it is certain to be somewhere in Medford. McGlynn and other officials are concerned that if the Green Line is extended past the proposed Boston and College avenues stop, eminent domain will be necessary to lay the additional tracks.

“Whether you’re for or against [the project] isn’t the issue, because it looks like it’s coming,” said City Councilor Robert Maiocco. “There’s going to be some land taking. There’s no doubt about it.”

Maiocco’s position was the same as McGlynn’s: put the terminus around Tufts, where Medford’s residential neighborhoods would not fall victim to eminent domain.

The old Lowell commuter rail line provides the project’s main corridor, but additional tracks will need to be put down and the corridor widened.

“The Green Line will run alongside the existing commuter rail line,” said Kate Fichter, EOTPW deputy project manager.

Arial maps showed that widening the corridor after the Tufts area of South Medford would require some land from the yards of many homes.

Some residents voiced their support in extending the Green Line all the way to Mystic Valley Parkway from the Hillside.

“I think it’s an amazing opportunity,” said Elizabeth Bolton of Cotting Street, who once lived in Cambridge. “I lived in the absolute middle of nowhere in Porter Square before the T got there. Now it’s the hot spot where everyone wants to be.”

Bolton was one of a number of people who feel the opportunity to extend the Green Line is a rare privilege that should be taken as far as it can go.

Dr. William Wood, Medford resident and member of the project’s advisory group, was quick to provide a counterpoint.

“Yes, the T may give you a job,” said Wood, pointing out that Bolton is a real estate agent. “It may give you a building to live in. But what about the people who don’t have the money for it?”

Wood pointed out that an increase in commerce along the new Green Line route through Medford could change the economic fabric of the area. Over time, he suggested, lower income households might be pushed out due to rising costs.

Stephen Woelfel, manager of statewide transit planning with the EOT, said nothing is set in stone.

“We’re trying to make this work for everyone and be respectful to people’s yards and homes,” said Woelfel, stressing many times throughout the meeting that the project is studying many alternate routes for the extension and nothing is definite.

Woelfel also wanted to quell any rumors about the EOT aiming to place a maintenance facility in Medford. He suggested the facility, which would be at minimum 11.5 acres, would most likely land in Somerville.

“We have a planning process and we have to look at everything,” he said. “We do know that it’s going to be a big facility.”

As of yet there are no proposed parking lots or garages for the areas around the stops. While proponents of a parking lot near the terminus said it would prevent people from taking street side parking spaces, abutters claimed a parking area would flood the city with more people.

“I think there’s this assumption that public transportation is something you drive to,” said Andy Oakland, a Somerville resident. “I think of public transportation as something you walk to.”

Where the project stands

Project planners are currently studying four build alternatives. Two would extend the Green Line to the Medford Hillside...
and two, to the Mystic Valley Parkway. Each of the two destinations includes a spur to Union Square, via the Fitchburg commuter rail line or with cars running in the street on Somerville Avenue.

Fichter said these possibilities are still being studied and are part of a much larger process.

“We are in the first six month of an 18-month planning process,” said Fichter. “The survey work will tell us more of what we need to know.”

She said the EOT and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB), the consulting firm preparing the environmental impact report, are currently studying operations, noise vibration, air quality, land taking, traffic and parking, maintenance facility needs, potential impacts during construction and longer-term impacts to the surrounding communities.

Though project planners are pushing the message that they are listening to public comment and that nothing is certain, some are doubtful.

“It sounds to me as if it’s all carved in granite and we’re all just listening to it,” said Gwen Blackburn, a concerned Medford resident.

Blackburn suggested that even as project planners have listened to public comment, not much has changed about how the project is presented. Also, she said, it took too long for them to begin serious public outreach.

“Who cares about the money?” she said. “We care about our nice neighborhoods that we have.”

Lee Auspitz, member of the project’s advisory group representing Somerville, said residents should appreciate the opportunity for any public comment.

“The process is a lot better than it used to be,” said Auspitz, who was involved in a Red Line extension years ago and said project planners then barely consulted the public at all.

The general public, however, is not satisfied. The idea of having four train tracks behind the house does not bode well with many.

Maiocco said he received a number of phone calls after the meeting. He said concerned citizens are organizing.

“There seems to be groups organizing in the neighborhoods,” said Maiocco, who added he has heard of new groups forming in the Hillside and other places “They’re going to be meeting in their homes. It’s just concern, they don’t want their yards to be taken for a rail road track that’s going to go through their kitchen.”

Maiocco said he would fight until the end to prevent any land taking.

At this stage it is too early to tell exactly how much land will need to be taken. As for the terminus of the project, the EOT does not even have a proposed build alternative that halts the extension at Boston or College avenues, so avoiding land taking entirely does not appear feasible.

“Both the proponents of the project and those that are against it have the same concerns,” said Ken Kraus, a Medford resident and member of the advisory group. “Let’s look at it as far as it can go. This is a rare opportunity to increase public transportation and it doesn’t make sense to stop it at Ball Square.”
Group studies possible Green Line effects in east Somerville

By Mia Lamar

Standing on a sun-baked sidewalk in Gilman Square, cars and trucks barreling by, one may have thought Danny LeBlanc, chief executive officer of the Somerville Community Corporation, chose an odd spot for a press conference. Yet LeBlanc, speaking to announce the release of two reports examining equitable and smart development strategies for East Somerville, insisted that the small group gathered before him look past where they stood today and think to the future of this, and many other Somerville neighborhoods.

"Imagine," said LeBlanc, nearly shouting over roaring traffic, "what this neighborhood will look like when the Green Line stops here."

Transit was the primary theme of Friday's conference, as the SCC officially released a report it commissioned to examine transit-oriented growth strategies for the future development of east Somerville neighborhoods.

The report was prepared by Reconnecting America, an Oakland, CA based non-profit organization that delivers "impartial, fact-based perspective on transit-oriented development" for communities across America.

According to Sam Zimmerman-Bergman, a project director for Reconnecting America, 30 percent of Somerville's population today lives within a half-mile of transit centers. With the extension of the Green Line and a proposed Orange Line stop in Assembly Square, that will jump to 85 percent of Somerville residents - an "incredible richness of transit," said Zimmerman-Bergman.

Though an exact location has not been officially determined, the state is committed to opening an East Somerville Green Line stop in 2014, said Monica Lamboy, director of strategic planning and community development for the city of Somerville, at Friday's conference.

Somerville's future wealth of transit will make it a highly desirable location to both live and work, particularly amongst today's economic uncertainties. "People want to live close to their jobs," said Zimmerman-Bergman. "Places like Somerville are well positioned to weather the storm."

Among the findings in its report, Reconnecting America examined existing Somerville-area transit stations - Porter, Davis and Sullivan Square - to "see what lessons these stations can provide about the future." In the Porter and Davis Red Line station areas, both of which opened in 1986, it found median household incomes jumped by roughly 60 percent between 1990 and 2000, making them 21 percent higher than the citywide median. Today, according to Reconnecting America's research, property values and rents around the Red Line are "higher than the rest of the city."
Yet, Reconnecting America's report also found that such drastic increases in income and affordability were not consistent with the neighborhood surrounding the Orange Line's Sullivan Square station, where incomes were approximately 18 percent lower than the citywide median in 2000. The report noted that this data "suggests that some equitable strategies appropriate for other parts of the city that have not experienced as much change may not be effective in the Red Line station areas," a theme repeated several times by LeBlanc at Friday's conference.

"Not one size will fit all," said LeBlanc.

He also noted that the SCC has identified three major priorities in maintaining mixed-income communities in Somerville's developing neighborhoods: leveraging new market rate housing, preserving existing opportunities in inclusionary zoning, and providing assistance to neighborhood businesses around developing transit areas. Also released at Friday's conference was a report on the SCC's East Somerville Initiative, a broader set of visions for the development of East Somerville, born of the SCC's desire to create a plan to "build and sustain without displacement."

The SCC set out on this task two years ago, said LeBlanc, organizing more than 350 people into three community summits. Eight large working groups were formed in the winter of 2007, to analyze issues such as jobs, schools and streetscape.

The final community summit was held in October 2007, forming an action plan with 27 goals towards equitable growth and progress in east Somerville. With the release of Friday's report, SCC reported that 24 of the 27 established goals have made progress since October. The number one priority identified by the ESI, a Community Benefits Campaign led by the East Somerville Neighbors for Change, was partially achieved with the creation of a local hiring agreement with Assembly Square's IKEA store.

Posted at 06:00 AM in News | Permalink

Comments

Gilman Square is not East Somerville. East Somerville starts at McGrath - unless, of course, the new people want to change that? So far, change has been good, but you don't have to go re-naming areas of the City.

Posted by: WinterHill | July 19, 2008 at 12:07 PM

The presence of the orange line doesn't seem to make far East Somerville too expensive or lacking in diversity and in general there are certainly low income areas near T stops when you look at the T system as a whole.

Posted by: nobody3 | July 21, 2008 at 02:51 PM

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This is only a preview. Your comment has not yet been posted.

Post Edit

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GLAM challenges Green Line petition as not 'scientific'

By Rob Barry/rbarry@cnc.com

Thu Aug 14, 2008, 12:00 PM EDT

Medford -

The Green Line Advisory Group of Medford (GLAM) last week challenged the validity of a survey released by the Medford Green Line Neighborhood Alliance (MGNA) presenting 2,022 signatures in support of bringing the Green Line extension to an end at Route 16 in Somerville.

“I don’t see it as being a scientific petition or representing more than 1 percent of Medford,” said Carolyn Rosen, chairperson of GLAM.

Of the signatures, 48 percent, or about 970, listed a Medford residence. Rosen said this should not be taken as the general will of the city's inhabitants.

“Of course it’s not a scientific study of public opinion,” said Ken Krause, MGNA spokesperson. “It’s a petition putting forth a point of view and it’s a thousand more signatures than I’ve seen from any other organization on this issue.”

In addition, Rosen said, the petition was not presented in the context of all the issues surrounding a Route 16 terminus location. The Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) has lately urged members of the Green Line Extension Project Advisory Group, of which Krause is a member, to withhold recommendations for a terminus stop until a number of scientific studies are completed.

The studies include analyses of noise, vibration, ridership numbers and possible terminus locations on College Avenue in Medford and Route 16. It is expected that the results of the studies will weigh heavily into the EOT’s future recommendations.

“Anyone signing a petition needs to look at the social equitable issues as well as the mitigation issues,” Rosen said.

The petition was posted online at medfordgreenline.org from June 5 to July 31 and read as follows: “The Executive Office of Transportation is currently studying options for a terminus location for the MBTA Green Line Extension to Medford. The Medford Green Line Neighborhood Alliance believes the best location for the terminus is Route 16 (Mystic Valley Parkway) near the Medford/Somerville/Arlington line. This location would:

- Provide Green Line access to thousands of people within a 10-minute walk
- Be conveniently located on two major thoroughfares with existing bus connections
- Serve two large portions of Medford and Somerville designated as Environmental Justice communities

If you agree that the Green Line should be extended to Route 16, please sign below.”

Rosen said it would not be difficult to find support for a regional petition encouraging public transit.

When presented to the EOT on Aug. 4, MGNA packaged the petition with a supporting demographic analysis. The demographic analysis, conducted by a member of the Harvard Map Collection and two members of Massachusetts Geographic Information System, showed that a Route 16/Mystic Valley Parkway stop would serve an additional 9,116 residents living within a half mile.
Many of those benefited, the study found, would be low-income, minority and foreign-born residents.

Krause said the study was done using 2001 census data.

“The demographic analysis was done independent of the petition,” Krause said. “But they do support each other.”

This same data also supports a project enhancement that GLAM has been seeking for some time, said Rosen. Last year, GLAM submitted a proposal to the EOT recommending the Green Line project be redirected after the Ball Square stop to continue down Broadway in Somerville to a terminus at the Alewife T station. According to the census data, such a stop would indeed be located closer to a number of underprivileged Medford residents.

“When we presented it, we presented it because we were told by the EOT that we were allowed to propose alternatives,” said Rosen.

The alternative GLAM proposed would require tunneling, as it would not follow the existing Lowell Commuter Rail corridor along Boston Avenue. Rosen said the alternative would lessen airborne contaminants and reduce the possible need for land taking.

The EOT reviewed GLAM’s proposed alternative and on May 28 released a statement concluding that, while it would be as good as most proposals for connectivity and access, it was not cost effective to tunnel and did not fit as well into the existing transportation framework.

Furthermore, the project carries a state mandate to service the Medford Hillside area. The EOT concluded that this particular alternative would not.

But GLAM is still concerned that a Route 16/Mystic Valley terminus would upset communities along its path. Rosen said she feels the location supported by MGNA's petition may not be in Medford’s best interest and that the economic development incentives at that location are suspiciously high.

“If you allow public interest groups to set the direction,” said Rosen, “you open yourself up to future complications.”

Comments (10)
SparkPlug
7 months ago
Report Abuse
'scientific petition'?

Ms Rosen seems to be confusing a petition with a poll. A poll undertakes to ascertain the positions the members of some group of people hold. A petition reveals the number and identity of some of the people who hold a particular position.

medford1630
7 months ago
Report Abuse
Indeed, Ms. Rosen should refer back to the minutes of the October Green Line project advisory group, at which GLAM presented its request for a study of an alternative plan it was offering that would divert the Green Line away from Medford at Ball Square and take it in a tunnel through Somerville toward Alewife Station. On page 7 of the GLAM request (page 17 of the Minutes linked below) there is a 'Petition for Alternative Study.' It contains 9 signatures from Medford, which represents approximately 0.00016 of the city's population.

https://www.commentmgr.com/projects/1228/docs/AG meeting 102507 final combined.pdf
SparkPlug
7 months ago
Report Abuse
'GLAMs proposed alternative ... would be as good as most proposals...' (How's that for faint praise?)

In fact, EOT retained the services of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, a professional civil engineering firm, to evaluate the GLAM proposal under the same criteria that were used to evaluate other options that were considered before the GLAM proposal was advanced. VHB's findings (dated May 29) are at https://www.commentmgr.com/projects/1228/docs/GLAM Response-Revised 06-02-08_withattachment.pdf and include the following statements (page 3):
'The GLAM Alternative has the LOWEST composite score of all the alternatives considered.' [Higher scores are better, emphasis added.]

'Additionally, the cost for tunneling would be significantly higher than retro-fitting the existing commuter rail ROW, and the construction would be much more complicated.'

Last place in the objective evaluation, more expensive and complicated ... is this the option that should be pursued?

I don't know whether Rosen was deliberately misleading or simply mistaken, but civil engineering contradicts her assertions. There may be some subject matter in which she is an expert, but in matters of railroad construction, I'm sticking with the civil engineers.

ywpeesum
7 months ago
Report Abuse
Deliberately misleading, for sure!
ww2
7 months ago
Report Abuse
I am a GLAM member and I helped write the alternative proposal. This is an alternative proposal, not a petition although there were folks who asked to sign it. It was not a solicited petition and that was noted to EOT. It would only take one person's name to be accepted for study, which is all an alternative proposal is asking for additional studies and it was written by recognized public transportation supporters (GLAM).

The alternative proposal was written because people during the process of the Beyond Lechmere Study process felt they were left out by not having environmental justice and people with disabilities included on the committee representation and their needs may not have been addressed within that process. A member of the Sierra Club helped work on this alternative proposal. The Urban Ring project supported by the state was suggesting a ring like process around the transit system, which the GLAM alternative proposal takes into consideration so the Green Line can access the Red Line without going out of its way.

The alternative proposal by federal standards has been determined to be an enhancement to the system according to their recent rulings. To my knowledge I don't believe that the alternatives for Union Square or Route 16 have been considered enhancements yet. If I am wrong, I will take the hit for it. But I don't believe they have yet been designated as enhancements by the federal government. They too are considered alternatives.

As for the number of names, there was no active petition as I said. The document did not need it. The federal government has recognized GLAM as an organization in support of public transportation projects. Unlike other projects, the majority of our elected members to the board of directors are people with disabilities or environmental justice populations along with abutters and other concerned citizens.

Our enhancement/alternative again is not a public petition. It also questions the objectivity of people who work on the project who are getting paid to work on other projects for the same cities. This would be like the tobacco industry working on anti tobacco agendas (are they truly objective?) and nullifying anyone else's work. I don't think we need this type of non objective discourse.

As for engineers having the final say, the commenter obviously is not aware that Route 16 nor the Union Square Spur could stand on their own without being part of the total Green Line project. Now if you combine our enhancement with the two of them, it fits perfectly. Our enhancement does not talk about Medford in regards to stopping anything. What we said is that if the Medford track becomes not viable in the study process, our enhancement might address that part of their issue. But that the enhancement might by itself address a larger problem of public transportation that is not connected currently to a Urban Ring method. It also talked about tunneling as a better way to address the EPA standards, which at the last EOT Advisory meeting, was borne out by a former EPA employee who is now preparing the air quality studies for this project.

The last question on all of this is, why is it for the last year that people have been objecting to what the environmental justice population is stating and the disability community is saying? And why were these groups not appointed to the representation on the EOT Advisory Committee from Somerville? This is a very interesting question and I hope someone can answer this question prior to many of the development projects that Somerville will be undertaking connected to the Green Line.

hkk
What are you talking about WW2? Your post makes no sense. You mix up members of the Sierra Club, Tabac, and public transportation in one incoherent post.

It’s signatures on a petition. The way lots of stuff gets represented in the world, including going on a ballot to be president of the United States. I think it has some basis in reality, unlike your ramblings.

You need to fact check the following paragraph, it sounds to me as if you picked this up at the City Council meeting as opposed to checking with EOT:

'The Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) has lately urged members of the Green Line Extension Project Advisory Group, of which Krause is a member, to withhold recommendations for a terminus stop until a number of scientific studies are completed.'

If you did check, than you need to site the source. There are several members of the advisory board that publically support a Rt. 16 terminus so my hunch is that there is no such admonishment. It would be like asking Somerville not to advocate to move the maintenance facility or to wait to come up with Union square spur alternative, all of which are being actively addressed by group members.

I think sometimes people misunderstand the relationship of organizations like VHB and EOT to the citizenry. They are in fact working for us, not the other way around.

Jared Ingersoll

Medford Jared makes a good point, Reporter Barry. Just because someone makes a statement to you doesn't mean it is true. One tipoff is when the statements are contradictory. According to your article, Ms. Rosen says that EOT instructed advisory group members not to take a position on the Green Line extension until studies were completed; at the city council meeting, she said that Mayor McGlynn told the Medford advisory group representatives not to take a position until studies were completed. Which is it? I suspect it's neither. But all you had to do was call EOT or Mayor McGlynn and ask them if the statements were true. That's Journalism 101.

SparkPlug

Medford Jared makes a good point, Reporter Barry. Just because someone makes a statement to you doesn't mean it is true. One tipoff is when the statements are contradictory. According to your article, Ms. Rosen says that EOT instructed advisory group members not to take a position on the Green Line extension until studies were completed; at the city council meeting, she said that Mayor McGlynn told the Medford advisory group representatives not to take a position until studies were completed. Which is it? I suspect it's neither. But all you had to do was call EOT or Mayor McGlynn and ask them if the statements were true. That's Journalism 101.

SparkPlug

At the Medford City Council Meeting on August 12, GLAM undertook to discredit the data and discourage the Council from accepting what it shows. Now we find it’s credible enough for Ms Rosen to claim that it supports a rejected GLAM proposal. I’m confused ... does GLAM trust the data or not?

SparkPlug
we received far more signatures than we ever thought we would. For the record, the online petition is still open (www.medfordgreenline.org) and the best thing Green Line supporters could do is continue to add hundreds or thousands of more names to it to make it clear to the EOT and our elected leaders that tens of thousands of Somerville, Medford and Arlington residents want better transit and with it, better access to employment cultural and education opportunities.

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Mystic Valley Parkway in Medford is a place where the urban and suburban converge - where car noise competes with the sound of the crickets at night, where traffic weaves along the river and skirts densely settled neighborhoods, where bottle caps and discarded scratch tickets mingle in the greenery of the parkway.

Near Medford's border with Somerville and Arlington, the parkway, also known as Route 16, passes under a graffiti-speckled railroad bridge that carries commuter-rail trains bound for Lowell and back. That spot may become the end point of a roughly 4-mile, $600 million extension of the Green Line from East Cambridge through Somerville and Medford.

Or it may not.

State officials will decide this fall whether to extend the Green Line just to College Avenue, amid Tufts University and thousands of students and staff eager for a link to Boston, or continue the tracks for another mile through the Medford Hillside to Mystic Valley Parkway, near a Whole Foods store and within a half-mile walk for nearly 10,000 residents of Medford, Somerville, and Arlington.

It's a choice that has divided Medford residents and reveals how they see their city of 56,000 - to some an urban-styled cousin of Cambridge and Somerville that would be improved by rapid transit, to others a fully formed suburban neighbor of Arlington and Winchester that is just fine without the Green Line's trolley cars.

To Ken Krause, stopping short of the Mystic Valley Parkway would be, well, short-sighted. "You get a chance to do something like this once in 100 years," he said recently.

Krause, who serves on a local committee advising the state on the project, highlighted the advantages of bringing the T all the way to the parkway: More commuters could use the line, reducing auto emissions. And putting the terminus on Route 16 would mean fewer motorists would head into Tufts.

That's not how Bob Kangas sees it. He spotted Krause leading a reporter through the area and emerged to offer a rebuttal. "He's pushing it. It's a special interest," said Kangas, who thinks the extra stop would pad the project cost, rattle adjacent houses, and attract more traffic to the neighborhood.

Nearly 20 years ago, the state committed to the Green Line project to avoid a lawsuit from the Conservation Law Foundation, which threatened to block the Big Dig if Massachusetts did not also make transit improvements. But it remained on a back burner for years, until pressure from the foundation, Somerville officials, and others brought it to the fore. Governor Deval Patrick and lawmakers have pledged full funding to complete the project by the end of 2014, even if the federal government doesn't pitch in.

"We're moving forward anyway, federal approval or not," said Wendy P. Stern, state undersecretary for transportation planning and program development. "But we do feel this project is worthy at the federal level for the green light."

State planners are at an important stage. In the spring, they revealed the placement and nature of most
stations, but some critical questions remain unanswered: Where in Medford will the route end, and what will that stop look like? How do you branch the route to Union Square, where Somerville planners envision the second coming of Davis Square? And where in Somerville do you put the 24-hour, 11-acre maintenance yard that will serve the new cars on the extended Green Line?

Those answers, Stern said, will come in an environmental impact report that should be released by late October.

The report, which will be submitted for state and federal environmental review, will also answer other questions, like the expected impact on ridership, emissions, noise, drainage, and private property for the preferred route and alternatives. It will allow the state to enter the engineering stage next year and prepare for construction from 2011 through 2014, state officials said.

Medford officials are awaiting the report before taking a position on the College Avenue vs. Route 16 question.

"If there's a way of doing it that's not going to shake somebody's house off the foundation, make them smell the diesel, take their yard, and flood out their basement, then let's do it," said Frederick N. Dello Russo Jr., a Medford city councilor on the Green Line Extension Project Advisory Group. "But if it's going to really do a job on people, let's quit while we're ahead and stop it at College Avenue."

In Somerville, officials and residents have embraced the project from the start; in Medford, officials are lukewarm, residents divided. That's partly because some of Somerville's stops would go to commercial or industrial areas targeted for economic redevelopment, and Medford's would not. But it's also rooted in the geography, history, and demography of the cities, and the way residents perceive their communities.

"It's two different things, in many ways, for two different communities," said Dello Russo.

Somerville, long the densest city in New England, took shape around the rails more than a century ago, warrens of multifamily housing organized around commercial squares and served by local streetcars and rail lines that stopped en route to Boston.

But in the 20th century, planners stripped the transit stops, thrust in two elevated highways, and left the city reliant on buses and automobiles - even as the commuter trains that served outer suburbs still churned through daily.

In the mid-1980s, the MBTA returned one stop to Somerville, at Davis Square on the Red Line. Once run-down and boarded-up, Davis Square became a destination, jammed with colorful shops and restaurants and home to the city's priciest real estate.

Medford, as Green Line opponents especially note, is no Somerville. While the cities resemble each other in some places, they are essentially different.

Somerville is far more compact: It had 19,000 residents per square mile, according to the 2000 Census, while its neighbor had fewer than 7,000 per square mile. Nearly 40 percent of Medford's housing units were detached, single-family homes; in Somerville, the figure was less than 10 percent.

Although Medford in recent years has attracted home buyers seeking a more affordable version of Cambridge, it remains a place where second-generation immigrant families have obtained a share of suburbia, and where their children stay to raise their children.

And within Medford itself, there are different perspectives, often splitting along generational lines or time spent in Medford.
Krause is a freelance writer and editor who moved to Medford eight years ago. Kangas is a Korean War veteran who still refers to "Tufts College," despite a name change in 1955.

In August, the pro-transit Medford Green Line Neighborhood Alliance, of which Krause is a member, presented the City Council with a pro-Route 16 petition signed by 2,022 people from Medford and beyond.

At the same meeting, another organization, the Green Line Advisory Group of Medford, challenged the petition as unscientific and misrepresentative. That group has called for stopping at Tufts and putting the Medford extension underground.

"Arlington, Winchester, Stoneham [are] not welcoming the extension in their towns and cities, so it will stop in Medford," Jeanette Ciampi, a self-described Hillside advocate since 1962, said at the May meeting in which state officials revealed most station locations.

She asked them to spare her neighborhood.

David Rajczewski, an engineer who moved to the Hillside nine years ago, rose to speak soon after: "Build it, build it, build it - go, go, go." 

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Green Line debate unbalanced

September 28, 2008

I enjoyed Eric Moskowitz's article on the Green Line extension possibly terminating at Route 16 ("Whither goes the Green Line?" Globe NorthWest, Sept. 21) but wish the debate had been examined more closely. On one side: Thousands from affected areas signed the petition for the extension of the Green line to Route 16, which is also supported by our state and federal representatives. On the other side: A handful of abutters and the city officials who pander to them.

If you want to shine some light on this issue, I suggest that the Globe investigate the GLAM anti-Green Line group, whose writings bring up talk of culture wars and crazy schemes to avoid the Green Line in Medford at all costs. Even residents on the fence about this issue find it curious that while GLAM dismisses the validity of the 2,000-plus signatures on the pro-Green Line petition, the two dozen signatures they collected compelled the state Executive Office of Transportation to spend six months investigating an implausible red herring of a transportation scheme which rerouted the Green Line from Ball Square underground to Alewife.

Moskowitz is correct in identifying the conflict as one between old and new Medford. What is not acknowledged is that long after all of us are dead and gone, what legacy will be left for the even newer residents of Medford?

Margaret Weigel
Medford
Brickbottom residents, Mayor concerned about Green Line

By Vladimir Lewis

Somerville Mayor Joe Curtatone met with a group of concerned Brickbottom Studio residents to discuss the current controversy over the development of the Inner Belt, the Green Line Extension and the proposed Green Line maintenance facility, on Dec. 29 in the community room at the artist's complex.

Curtatone was very serious about fighting to keep the Green Line maintenance facility from being built in its proposed spot directly next to Brickbottom.

"We're very committed to pushing for this change. We don't believe this will work. We cannot accept it if it is built right here - and you can base that decision on logic, not just emotion."

The mayor gave an opening statement, various city leaders were introduced and then Monica Lamboy, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, gave a powerpoint presentation to a group of about 75.

Lamboy presented an overview of the whole project with aerial views, and then progressed to the main concern of many of the audience - the location of the maintenance facility.

The current Environmental Impact Report from the State was expected to be published in January and some leaders said the best organizational strategy was to wait until the final plan was published.

Lamboy mentioned there were 6 to 8 alternative plans for the Inner Belt. "It was a sincere search, they really looked at these options, but at the end of the day, the state came back to their original plan."

The mayor continued on about the struggle with the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT). "We want them to envision something positive for our city 10, 20, 30 years from now. They've had a committed position all down the line. There's a lot of tunnel vision with the left hand not talking to the right hand. It's really tough...they care, they want to do a good job, but it would be great to see more creativity and talent in the process."

Many of the group spoke during the Q and A that followed the powerpoint presentation. Most of the crowd were Brickbottom residents and many were very worried, since the proposed maintenance facility would be just 20 feet from their home.

A person asked if the MBTA was involved. Lamboy answered: "The MBTA has not been involved as far as strategy is concerned."

Another asked if the Governor was involved. Curtatone said, "He is aware of it and he has listened, but we're mainly dealing with Secretaries at this point."

An elderly man and 20-year complex resident spoke up: "I'd love to see a picket line in front of the Governor's house with signs saying How would you like a maintenance facility built 20 feet from YOUR house?! In order to get this defeated maybe we have to be more active, more dramatic. We have nothing against the workers. I know everyone needs work, but they will use this against us."

State senator Pat Jehlen was present and she was asked her opinion."We need to understand the constraint they're working under in order to get them to move on. I'm hopeful, but you have to understand what the other side is working with."

Another resident added: "A lot of artists voted for Governor Patrick. We're a cultural capital. I think that's a greater issue for the City of Boston and the State."
Alderman Bill White and Brickbottom trustee-resident Heather Van Aelstcboth emphasized the best strategy was to wait until after the plan is published to completely organize any resistance.

The mayor had also passed out to the group a letter from his office to the EOT - he then summarized the letter and stressed it's three main tenants about the whole Inner Belt project. "Our team has said to them repeatedly we want these three main things: no impeding of economic growth., we want to decrease barriers to movement and access not increase them, and no facility should adversely impact the quality of life for area residents."

The discussion continued and the only heated moment of the night occurred when a man argued that not putting the maintenance facility at North Point in Cambridge but sticking to the current plan of locating it next to Brickbottom would help both cities because of the business brought in by further North Point development.

A lady resident turned sharply to him and said, "You obviously don't live here." A disagreement followed about what would be business zoning and what would be residential. The lady said there would indeed be business sections in the Inner Belt that would bring business and revenue to Somerville. The mayor agreed.

A thoughtful female resident said: "It should be like Cambridge here. It's such valuable land, so close to these world class institutions. How can we help you? What can we do to make this tangible for you?"

It was stressed again that the community should wait for the publishing of the EIR. A man asked whether the rest of the city cared and would join in a fight. The mayor seemed positive about this. "The high school (gym) has been filled more than once (in the past) - they'll come out. We haven't yelled at the state for some time."

The older man who spoke before said," I'm an original Brickbottomer. Our lives really depend on it."

Another resident questioned the Mayor as to how serious he was about a resistance to the proposed plan. Curtatone said, "We're going to be as tenacious as a rabid dog on this. But we still need to be strategic on how we do things."

Before the powerpoint presentation, Alderman Maryann Heuston pushed for aldermen throughout the city to make regular inspections and ticket infractions without warning. She made note of when her three walks were for January and encouraged anyone interested to join her.

Heuston said, "It really should be routine that aldermen are doing this. We can sit here in this room and describe things out there, but it's really best if we get out there and walk together."

Reader Comments

Posted: Friday, February 06, 2009
Article comment by: normal person

I thought it was all NIMBY for sure, but the mayor has convinced me otherwise. The state is going for the fastest and cheapest solution without regard for the future. Unfortunately, we only get about one chance every 50 years to get this right. There are several more practical shapes and locations for the maintenance facility. They don't cost more, they just require more thought.

On another note: There are about 300 people at that Brickbottom Bldg. There are bound to be some NIMBYs and some whiners, but to lump and bash them shows real ignorance.

Disclaimer: I can't stand the @#$%$+ green line anyway. I'd rather walk.

Posted: Friday, January 23, 2009
Article comment by: Mazda

I think the Brickbottom residents need to be mindful that the same not in my back yard mentality is bound to kill this project. Most of them favor (I think transit) and would it be hard for them to sacrifice their convenience for the benefit of many? They are artists and as such they live to enrich the lives of others with their creativity. I would expect more from them than I would from the Governor.

EOT may end up throwing their hands if the project gets bogged down with all the community wrangling, not to mention all the regulatory hurdles they have to go through, around this project.

Mazda

Posted: Monday, January 19, 2009
Article comment by: Snowflake

Are these dopes for real? They ride bikes in the winter! They bang on your winshield if your car is idling! They put nasty notes on SUV's! And they bitched and moaned about getting a frigging enclosed bus stop near thier little warehouse! Now they finally get the thing they bitched about wanting for years, the green line, and now they still bitch! Someone please remind these treehuggers that the city don't revolve around thier needs only and that they live in a two hundred year old industrial area which was the former A&P warehouse which also housed rats before they moved into town and began trying to take over! And just one more thing, someone, anyone, please
tell them that NcDonald's now sells lattes! So now they can shave of those lame beards and girly birres!
Love Snowflake!

Posted: Wednesday, January 14, 2009
Article comment by: yuppiescum

"Art" won't get me to work in the morning.

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SOMERVILLE

T stops could wake up sleepy squares

By Danielle Dreilinger, Globe Correspondent | February 15, 2009

Ball Square didn't draw much foot traffic on a typical sleepy afternoon last Sunday. A few people walked by the square's small shops - a salon, a wine store - and the square's popular brunch places. Wig Zamore, a Somerville transit advocate who holds unpaid positions on a number of transit-project boards, stood above a small, shabby parking lot. Across the street, a small building boasted a big "for sale or lease" banner.

But if all goes according to the state's plan, in five years, that parking lot will be a station for the Green Line extension. The state Executive Office of Transportation issued recommendations Feb. 3 from a draft environmental impact report: five new stops in Somerville, with tracks running along existing rail beds.

Local officials and advocates are already way ahead, thinking about what changes might result.

Community members at numerous urban planning meetings over the last year have assumed that the proposed extension of the Green Line will mean big increases in activity (and rents) all along the line, as was the case with Davis Square after the subway station was built there during the 1984 Red Line extension project. Zamore said it revitalized that neighborhood.

Instead, transit watchers envision a mildly rejuvenated central city and a bustling, dense commercial district in the east.

"The fabric of the residential districts will be the same," Zamore said. "You have a valuable neighborhood here already."

In Ball Square, he predicted, "the restaurants will do even a little better." He imagined some new, small development running down to Magoun Square, less than half-mile away.

Davis Square was larger and more central to begin with, said city spokesman Tom Champion. "Every stop and every neighborhood has its different scale and density. It's not going to be a one-size-fits-all."

"Where do we want to grow?" Mayor Joe Curtatone asked rhetorically. The answer was clear: the strip of the city around McGrath Highway, running from Union Square to Lechmere.

Currently home to scrap metal yards, a UPS depot, a tow lot, and a large artist live/work building, the largely industrial area has "113 acres of underutilized land," Curtatone said. He wants new development in that area to balance out the city's tax rolls.

With three-quarters of its tax base coming from residential property taxes, the city is in a perpetual bind, Curtatone said. Businesses pay a higher tax rate and use fewer services.

However, there's a kink in the plan: The state transportation department also announced that it was sticking to its plan to site a maintenance facility in this zone.

"We've told them any type of facility cannot impede development," Curtatone said. If the transportation department continues with the current plan, he said, "We need to be able to develop above any facility."
(A recent study funded by the Kraft Family Foundation suggested building a stadium for the New England Revolution soccer team above an MBTA building near McGrath Highway.)

Kate Fichter, the transportation department's deputy project manager for the Green Line extension, said, "We continue to work with them to try to develop an idea that's mutually compatible."

As they think far ahead, advocates are hammering out the nitty-gritty next steps now - changes as simple as making sure station cross-streets have good sidewalks.

"How do you make the stations the most accessible to the most amount of people?" Zamore said.

Ellin Reisner, president of the Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership and a member of the Green Line citizen advisory committee, focused on creating bus connections to the line. "Union Square has five buses coming through, and they stop at different places," she said.

Most crucial is extending the bike path that currently runs through Davis Square. Zamore credited it for funneling people to the Red Line.

"The Community Path is going to bring a lot of riders to the T," Reisner agreed. A map from the Friends of the Community Paths projects the route right past the future Lowell Street stop, along the same right-of-way the new trains will travel.

Reisner said the transportation department didn't have the path on its "punch list" for the project she hoped a new requirement that its projects promote "healthy living" would change that.

In a way, the dream of the future brings back the past. About 50 years ago, Somerville had 25,000 more residents and 17 rail and trolley stops, Curtatone said, including a stop at Ball Square.

Photos show a train stopped right behind City Hall, as well as a handsome stone station at what is now Lexington Park.

The state and city want to get going: Not only is enthusiasm high, the Big Dig legal settlement that dictated the extension has a 2014 deadline.

The state transportation office plans to submit its draft environmental impact report to state and federal authorities "essentially as soon as possible," Fichter said. Public hearings and a public comment period will follow.

Zamore seemed optimistic. "We're in such a spectacular position," he said. Now, "we need to focus on good execution."

*The Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership meets on Feb. 23. The Executive Office of Transportation posts updates and documents on [www.greenlineextension.org](http://www.greenlineextension.org).*

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