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on Organization, Study & Review
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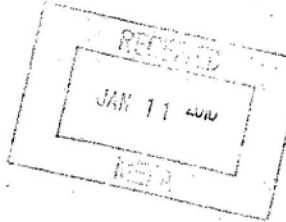
*Original that arrived after H/S
1/8/10*



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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January 4, 2010



Secretary Ian Bowles
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
MEPA Office
ATTN: Holly Johnson, MEPA Analyst
EEA #13886
100 Cambridge St., Ste. 900
Boston, MA 02114-2524

Dear Secretary Bowles:

I am writing with regard to your office's request for comments on the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MA DOT) joint Draft Environmental Report/Environmental Assessment for the Green Line Extension Project (GLX), FOEA No. 13886. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on the work MA DOT has done so far.

First, I want to re-affirm my strong support for the Green Line Extension. For years, residents and businesses in Somerville have had heavy rail passing through the city with only one stop, the Red Line's Davis Square station. They have lived with the noise, the construction and the loss of usable property. In addition to the numerous environmental justifications for this project – getting people out of cars and into trains, reduction in particulate matter, vehicle emissions, and etc. – finally providing the City of Somerville with transit stops is the right thing to do. I am pleased with MA DOT's commitment to this project and the effort that has so far been put in to planning it.

F-001-001

I understand and appreciate MA DOT's distinction between the Proposed Project and the Preferred Alternative. I am an unabashed supporter of extending the Green Line to Route 16/Mystic Valley Parkway as soon as possible. I have concern that MA DOT putting off the spur from Medford Hillside to Route 16 until later, the spur will forever live as a plan and not as reality. While I am heartened that highway funds have been 'flexed' already to finish the line out to Route 16 by 2020, there will be many, myself included, who will watch this carefully to be sure it happens. I urge the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to reinforce MA DOT's commitment.

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F-001-001

Although the extension to Mystic Valley Parkway/Route 16 was considered the Preferred Alternative for a full-build of the Green Line Extension Project, limitations on available funding prohibit the Commonwealth from extending the Green Line beyond College Avenue at this time. A future extension to Mystic Valley Parkway/Route 16 will require a separate environmental clearance process. MassDOT is considering initiating a community planning process for a future extension to Mystic Valley Parkway/Route 16 to obtain stakeholder input on station design and layout, neighborhood impacts, economic development, and other area planning issues.



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F-001-002 | I commend MA DOT for its commitment to include service to Union Square in the Proposed Project. However, I do not think the Proposed Project goes far enough. The North Station, South Station, Porter Square and Back Bay stations have both subway and commuter rail stops. Union Square, which will have a Green Line station and already has the Fitchburg Line passing through it, should also.

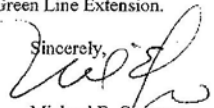
F-001-003 | In general, my thoughts and comments for the Proposed Project are entirely supportive. However, there are several issues for which I would like to underscore their importance. The first is the Somerville Community Path. I appreciate that MA DOT is planning and will construct

F-001-004 | GLX with the Community Path taken into account. This must continue. Second, I understand that in constructing GLX, there will be necessary work done on vehicular/pedestrian bridges spanning the right of way. The Commonwealth has an unfortunate history of closing Somerville's bridges and not reopening them for years. MA DOT must not drag its feet this time.

F-001-005 | Third, I urge that MA DOT be required to look closely at the bus routes in Somerville, with an eye toward how to best bring bus riders to GLX stations. I believe none of the stations are more than a quarter mile from a bus route. MA DOT ought to consider bringing the buses directly to these rail stops.

F-001-006 | As with many of my constituents, my greatest concern is about citing the maintenance and storage facility. I acknowledge the need for a maintenance and storage facility on the north side of the Green Line. I oppose the Preferred Maintenance Facility Site in Yard 8 and understand the problems associate with the alternative I most prefer, the Mirror H plan. That said, I find the Option L alternative to be the least objectionable and I conditionally support it. Option L, while moving the facility as far as possible from residences and as close as possible to the Boston Engine Terminal, must be built to best allow for continued development in the Inner Belt area. The MA DOT should move the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) offices out of its Cobble Hill area property and into this new facility. The Cobble Hill property could then be sold at market rate to help pay for the storage facility's construction, and replace the taxable property that will be removed from Somerville's tax roll by the facility.

In closing, I would again like to re-state my support for the Green Line Extension. I believe that the Green Line Extension, when completed, will address unmet public transit needs and spur economic growth in several Somerville neighborhoods. I appreciate the opportunity to offer my thoughts on how MA DOT should proceed with the Green Line Extension.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

F-001-002

Opportunities for a shared station between the Green Line Extension (on the Medford Branch) and MBTA Commuter Rail were evaluated for the Project. This connection was ultimately dismissed, as described in DEIR/EA Section 3.3, and Appendix B. While the potential for a joint station at Union Square would need to be studied further, it is not currently part of the Proposed Project. A connection currently exists between the Green Line and Commuter Rail at North Station; this connection would remain. However, as the Project advances into preliminary engineering, opportunities for future additions and extensions of service will be considered.

F-001-003

MassDOT has committed to complete the final design of the proposed Community Path between Lowell Street and the Inner Belt area. MassDOT is not able to commit to funding the construction of the Community Path. However, MassDOT will continue to work with the City of Somerville to identify potential state and Federal funding opportunities for the construction of the Community Path.

F-001-004

Construction impacts of the Project are described in each environmental resource section in DEIR/EA Chapter 5, Environmental Consequences. Detailed construction plans will be developed in the next phase of the Project. Affected bridges are described in DEIR/EA Section 3.7.2. Detour routes and emergency access during construction will be developed during preliminary engineering as part of the Traffic Management Plan. At least one bridge will need to be closed during construction (Medford Street). A temporary bridge may be able to maintain a single lane of traffic at the Broadway Bridge. For all other bridges, at least one lane will be maintained during construction. Pedestrian and vehicular access to abutting properties will be maintained at all times. Project bridge designs and construction staging plans will be refined during preliminary

engineering. The Public Involvement Plan (PIP), Chapter 6 of the FEIR, proposes a structure for community involvement during design and construction.

F-001-005

To the extent possible, Green Line Extension stations will be designed for accessible, convenient transferring between MBTA bus routes and Green Line light rail. MassDOT will work with the MBTA to evaluate opportunities to improve connections between existing bus routes and proposed stations.

F-001-006

An expanded technical and environmental analysis of the light rail storage and maintenance facility alternatives is included in FEIR Chapter 2, Maintenance Facility Alternatives Analysis. As a result of the evaluation, the Yard 8 location is not recommended for further consideration and Option L is identified as the preferred maintenance facility site.