

Memo

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Date: December 20, 2011
To: Mary Ainsley – Director of Design and Construction
From: Karen Arpino-Shaffer – Deputy Program Manager
Beverly Johnson – Public Involvement Consultant
Subject: Lechmere Station Meeting – Kennedy/Longfellow School, Somerville, 158 Spring Street,
Cambridge, MA – December 14, 2011
cc:

LOCATION/DATE OF MEETINGS:

Kennedy/Longfellow School, Somerville, 158 Spring Street, Cambridge, MA – December 14, 2011,
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

PROJECT TEAM: Mary Ainsley – MBTA; Michael McBride – HDR/Gilbane; Karen Arpino-Shaffer – HDR/Gilbane; Bob Cone - HDR/Gilbane; Vanessa White – HDR/Gilbane; Beverley Johnson – Bevco Inc.; Todd Blake – Fort Hill Infrastructure Services LLC; Mike Epp – Kleinfelder/SEA; Kyann Anderson – Kleinfelder/SEA; Tom Jin – Kleinfelder/SEA; Wai-Ming Kuo - Kleinfelder/SEA; Marlina St. Martin – Kleinfelder/SEA; Erin Kay – CSS; Josh Burgel – CSS; Maren Lane – CSS

HYM INVESTMENT GROUP ATTENDEES (NORTH POINT DEVELOPERS):

Thomas O'Brien
Matt Jayne
David Bracken
Anthony Gallucio
Doug Manz

AGENCY/ELECTED OFFICIALS:

William Deignan – City of Cambridge
Hayes Morrison – City of Somerville
Tim Toomey, Jr. – State Representative/City Council

MEDIA:

Scott Wachtler – Cambridge Chronicle

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Phil Brake – HNTB
John Orosz – Cambridge Resident
Jim Murphy – North Point Resident
Joseph Cutrufo – WalkBoston
Mary Ann Donofrio – Cambridge Resident

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John Filoon – Cambridge Resident
Lydia Lasionatis – Cambridge Resident
Barbara Popek – North Point Resident
Sean Sullivan – Design Working Group
Jonah Petri – Friends of the Community Path
Joe Avin – East Cambridge Planning Team
Broll Pah – Cambridge Resident
Susan Sloan Rossiter – VHB
Don Cooke - VHB
Steve Kaiser – Assoc. CAD
Charles Passanisi – Cambridge Resident
Chris Matthews – East Cambridge Planning Team
Dan McConvey – Cambridge Resident
M. Garity – East Cambridge Planning Team
Donna Keefe – East Cambridge Planning Team
Kelly Lottman – Cambridge Resident
Heather Hoffman – Cambridge Resident
Derek Lombard – Design Working Group
Alan Greene – East Cambridge Planning Team
Heather Van Aelst – Brick Bottom
Paul Cote – Cambridge Resident
Dennis Pelletier – North Point Resident
Jim Gascorgine – CRTMA
Jean Shrinan – DHK
George Katsoufis – DHK
Charles Poirier – Cambridge Resident
Will Sutton – Office of Rep. Tim Toomey
Rose Rosenberger – Cambridge Resident
Bal Auhonnan – East Cambridge Planning Team
Nick Book – Cambridge Resident
Ellin Reisner – STEP
Charles Marevesarotz – East Cambridge Planning Team
Rich McKinnon – McKinnon Company
Christopher Park – Glass Factory Condo Resident

HANDOUTS:

Lechmere Station Workshop Community Involvement Action List
Lechmere Station Meeting Agenda (December 14, 2011)

PURPOSE/SUBJECT: Lechmere Station Design Update Meeting

BACKGROUND: The Green Line Extension Project is an initiative of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) in coordination with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). This project will extend existing MBTA Green Line Service from Lechmere Station through the northwest Boston corridor communities of Cambridge, Somerville, and Medford, with an extension of the rail line to Medford and a spur line to Union Square in Somerville. The goals of the project are to increase mobility; encourage public transit usage; improve regional air quality; ensure a more equitable distribution of transit services; and support opportunities for sustainable development.

MEETING SUMMARY:

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Karen Arpino-Shaffer opened the meeting with introductions of the MBTA representatives, HDR/Gilbane team, and HYM team, and an overview of the meeting agenda, highlighting that the station design plans that were discussed at the June 2011 workshop were conceptual and tonight's presentations will show design progress. She indicated that some of the design challenges resolved by the project design team include the following:

The organization of the site plan and layout; lack of station and lobby orientation to the neighborhood; lobby size and creating a better entrance to the station off North First Street.

Ms. Arpino-Shaffer presented the matrices of community comments that were raised at the June workshop and indicated that a more detailed overview of the team's response to those concerns would be provided later in the meeting. She provided an overview of the community concerns as follows:

Community Concerns

The project team looked at all of the Lechmere Station comments, especially the following:

- ✓ Entrances and Orientation
- ✓ Pedestrian access across Monsignor O'Brien Highway
- ✓ Renaming O'Brien Highway to O'Brien Boulevard
- ✓ Coordinating the concerns of Glass Factory residents
- ✓ Station Parking
- ✓ Neighborhood Planning Studies
- ✓ Pedestrian experience at Water Street
- ✓ Busway and shelter designs

Ms. Arpino-Shaffer introduced Thomas O'Brien of HYM to present the North Point roadway design.

NORTH POINT ROADWAY DESIGN

Tom O'Brien presented the previously approved roadway plan for Msgr. O'Brien Highway and how it integrates with both the proposed Lechmere Station and the approved NorthPoint development. Mr. O'Brien stated that they are reviewing the Msgr. O'Brien Highway design to see what improvements can be made to the pedestrian connections & crossings are working to improve the integration of the new Green Line Station and are exploring at the community's request the inclusion of a public market.

Mr. O'Brien indicated that HYM moved First Street to the south to create a public plaza that will include a retail node. Tom O'Brien indicated that the relocation of First Street presents an opportunity to create a nice plaza and retail that will be a bookend to the commercial district. Mr. O'Brien indicated that HYM plans to work with the community to develop a retail use plan, possibly anchored by a grocery store. Tom O'Brien indicated that HYM received a lot of community input on what to use on the triangle space, and the consensus was that retail would be the best use. He also pointed out that North Point Park has been built.

Tom O'Brien stated that HYM agreed with the community not to include a right turn lane at O'Brien Boulevard in order to shorten pedestrian crossing distance and create a strong pedestrian zone. Additionally, some of the other traffic calming measures will include wide sidewalks.

SITE DESIGN (CSS)

Josh Burgel of CSS presented an overview of the current site design plan relative to the locational context of the station. Mr. Burgel highlighted the following components of the plan:

- ✓ **Neighborhood Access Diagram** – Describes which neighborhood will access the station at various locational points. Mr. Burgel pointed out that the team will make sure entrances are provided on all sides for all neighborhoods.
- ✓ **Viaduct-Level Plan** – Mr. Burgel pointed out that the team proposes to remove the old steel viaduct back to the concrete viaduct at Land Boulevard.
- ✓ **Ground-Level Plan at Southern End** – Mr. Burgel indicated that the current site design plan will include a pathway beneath the viaduct; and a pedestrian connection to the Lechmere Canal to disperse the pedestrian population at various points at the station.
- ✓ **Ground-Level Plan at Southern End** – Mr. Burgel highlighted the following elements of the plan: (a) Create a small plaza off East Street for multi-purpose space; (b) create access points to the station core; (c) create community path access to the station; and (d) create bike storage and parking.
- ✓ **Station Site Plan** – Josh Burgel pointed out the following elements of the plan: (a) The entrance from Water Street will be opened up to a ten-foot wide sidewalk along the busway; (b) An evergreen buffer with a glass block wall will be created to buffer Glass Works Condominium; (c) Storage will be provided for bikes; and (d) The Water Street entrance will have wider sidewalks.

STATION DESIGN (Kleinfelder/SEA)

Michael Epp, lead Architect for the Green Line Extension indicated that the design team learned a lot from the community's ideas that were shared at the June 2011 Station Design Workshop and incorporated many of these ideas into the station design. Mr. Epp highlighted the following components of the current station design:

Entry-Level Plan

- ✓ Mr. Epp pointed out that the entry level plan includes a placeholder of multi-purpose event space pending a final use decision. He also highlighted that the entry-level plan will integrate community space; include a bus station; eventually replace the adjacent surface parking lot with active retail; and that the station lobby has been opened up to create access on each side aisle and to provide sight views across the station.

Platform-Level Plan

- ✓ Mr. Epp pointed out that the platform has been sized for three-car trains, but can be extended for four-car trains in the future. He also pointed out that Lechmere will be the only elevated station out of the seven new Green Line Stations, and that wind shields will be provided to break the wind at the higher elevation. Mr. Epp also stated that two sound walls will be constructed to minimize noise at the Glass Works Condominium.

Station Elevation

- ✓ Michael Epp presented a station elevation plan and indicated that the view of the viaduct will be softened with street trees.

Section Through Station

- ✓ Michael Epp presented a cross section of Lechmere Station to provide a perspective of how the station will be organized at each level.

View from O'Brien Boulevard

- ✓ Mr. Epp indicated that the large, light filled space provides a direct view to O'Brien Boulevard, and will be shielded with an overhang in warm weather so the station remains cool, and will provide direct sunlight in winter to keep the station warm.

View from East Street

- ✓ Mr. Epp pointed out that the East Street edge of the station will be located at the edge of the North Point site and will provide a direct view to this future project.

View from Bus Station

- ✓ Mike Epp pointed out that passengers at the Bus Station will have a view of the station stairs and escalators, along with a view of the platform at any entrance.

PROJECT SCHEDULE (Karen Arpino-Shaffer)

Karen Arpino-Shaffer provided an overview of the project schedule. She indicated that the MBTA and team are projecting full operation of the Green Line in 2019. Ms. Arpino-Shaffer also pointed out that the Green Line Steering Committee focused on creating interim milestones to advance the project in incremental phases up to 2019. She further emphasized that the Steering Committee looked at phasing the project to achieve these milestones and performing a lot of the work on parallel tracks to advance the project as follows:

Phase I Early Bridge Work and Demolition

- ✓ Ms. Arpino-Shaffer provided an overview of the scope of work for the early phase bridge work and demolition as follows: (a) Reconstruct Harvard Street and Medford Street rail bridges; and (b) demolish 21 Water Street so the site can be used as a construction staging area. This work is expected to get underway in the fall of 2012.

Phase II

- ✓ Karen Arpino-Shaffer indicated that this work will include building the viaduct from Lechmere to Washington Street Station; building 3 new Green Line Stations including Lechmere, Washington and Union; and performing track and systems work.

Phase III

- ✓ Ms. Arpino-Shaffer stated that the Green Line Maintenance Facility for car storage and operations will be constructed in Phase III.

Phase IV

- ✓ Karen Arpino-Shaffer pointed out that Phase IV will encompass the construction of the remaining four Green Line stations from Washington Street to College Avenue.

RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Ms. Arpino-Shaffer provided an overview of MBTA and project team responses to community concerns that were raised at the June 2011 Lechmere Station Design Workshop as follows:

- ✓ **Station Entrances and Orientation** – Ms. Arpino-Shaffer pointed out that in accordance with earlier dialogue, the team has created more direct station access from a number of locations, and increased an earlier eight-foot pinch point at the station entrance to a thirty-foot wide entrance. The current design plan also includes covered walkways, and an entrance oriented to Water Street. In response to community concerns, the station will also have 3 exits. What was an emergency only exit off the end of the platform has been redesigned to be a open use exit to the area below. The project team also opened up the entrance at the intersection of O'Brien Boulevard and North First Street.

- ✓ **Pedestrian Experience at O'Brien Boulevard** – In response to community concerns around this issue, Karen Arpino-Shaffer indicated that the design team pulled the station forward to create a larger public plaza and more visible entrance.
- ✓ **Name Change from Highway to Boulevard** – Ms. Arpino-Shaffer indicated that in response to community concerns, the name change from O'Brien Highway to O'Brien Boulevard is currently under State consideration.
- ✓ **Coordination with Glass Factory** – Karen Arpino-Shaffer stated that the team evaluated and included in the design plans to address concerns from Glass Factory residents about the parking lot on O'Brien and the eight-foot pinch point. The straightening of North First Street creates more landscaping, and a larger sidewalk and plaza away from the parking lot. Additionally, the MBTA and project team representatives met with residents of the Glass Factory and have begun to address their concerns. The team will also create a 3-D model of the Glass Factory views and continue coordinating with residents on property lines, fencing, noise walls, and other station-impact issues.
- ✓ **Neighborhood Planning Studies** – Ms. Arpino-Shaffer indicated that the team has increased sidewalk widths on Water Street and increased the visibility at station entrances that are oriented to the north and south. Also, the lobbies are larger and a 3rd exit was added at East Street.

NEXT STEPS

Karen Arpino-Shaffer indicated that the team is putting together the Request for Qualifications and Request for Proposals for the selection of the final design team and Construction Manager, and expect selections to be made by the summer of 2012. She pointed out that HDR/Gilbane will provide project management and oversight during the final design and construction process.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Karen Arpino-Shaffer provided an overview of the upcoming winter/spring 2012 public meetings as follows:

- ✓ Early Phase Bridge Work (60%) – Mid-Late January 2012
- ✓ Washington Street Station – February 2012
- ✓ Union Square Station – February 2012
- ✓ Gilman Square and Lowell Street Station – March 2012
- ✓ Ball Square & College Avenue Stations – Late March 2012
- ✓ Retaining Walls, Noise & Vibration – Winter/Spring 2012
- ✓ Maintenance Facility and Community Path Workshops – Early April 2012

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Q: The station design has improved significantly. What is the estimated station cost? **A:** The station cost is not finalized pending additional design development work.

Q: The station design looks good. Why have a single escalator up and stairs down? The station needs two escalators so that when one breaks down, the other can be used. Also, in one proposal, all buses went in the same direction, and another showed the buses going in two directions. What was the final decision on this issue?

A: The buses will be going in one direction counter clockwise.

Q: The community is happy to see the attention and focus on O'Brien Highway. With regard to the proposed public plaza, the elevated rails will be directly overhead and will create a level of noise that will not be conducive to relaxation. Also, the community needs to be included in the HYM planning process associated with evaluating the potential uses on Parcel B. Since Cambridge Street is an all-commercial area, the triangular parcel, which has

three sides, would be a good fit for a nice café or diner. More importantly, the Parcel B orientation needs to be inviting to people visiting the old neighborhood.

Q: The current plan to take all buses away from Third Street is a very bad idea since they serve key municipal buildings, the Galleria Mall, and residential neighborhoods. This scenario would require people to go all the way around to reach the train station. Please don't change these bus routes. Also, are the bus shelters merely cosmetic or will they really provide shelter? **A:** MBTA staff and the project team have been meeting with MBTA operations staff about the existing bus routes to evaluate whether it makes sense to change existing routes. Additionally, the community can rest assured that bus routes cannot be changed without a public process that includes getting input from residents who use the buses. With regard to the bus shelters, during inclement weather, passengers will be able to stand in the unpaid lobby for shelter. Additionally, overhead canopies will run the length of the station platforms. Other measures for protecting passengers during inclement weather will be explored as the station design further advances.

Q: The community appreciates the HYM initiative on the proposed North Point improvements as a step in getting the conversation going. However, the East Cambridge Plan should be used to expand the vision. It is important to note that the MBTA and HYM presentation did not include traffic impacts relative to O'Brien Highway. In that regard, the MBTA owes the community a meeting to discuss safe pedestrian access across O'Brien. It was also pointed out that the MBTA did a great job in creating safe pedestrian access at Dewey Square in Boston, and they can do the same in East Cambridge.

Q: What are the milestones associated with renaming O'Brien? **A:** Early discussions at the state level are underway.

Q: It is exciting to see a design plan that makes sense. This is a huge improvement, especially as it relates to working with HYM. Can an automated fare entrance be provided on the east end of the station? Also, please keep in mind that this will not be just a MBTA station, but also a bus station, so the design needs to reflect this fact. The community needs more inclusion in the HYM planning process. **A:** Tom O'Brien of HYM suggested creating a working group to focus on traffic and other planning/design issues.

Q: The buses need First Street access to the station rather than going all the way around the horse shoe.

Q: The community needs a bus that can make a loop around Third Street and Cambridge Street rather than people having to walk to the station to get a bus. Also, pedestrian signalization measures at O'Brien Highway need to assume a worse-case scenario relative to physically disabled people having to cross the streets to access the station.

Q: Has the MBTA considered expanding to four-car trains? **A:** This option is under consideration, but the issue of expense is a significant factor relative to whether the MBTA will move forward with this option.

Q: Why does the roadway design still include two left-turn lanes? **A:** Current and future traffic volume has been evaluated, and it was determined that two left-turn lanes are necessary to alleviate queuing of cars back to the midblock crossing.

Q: Where will the North Point path run? Who is responsible for connecting the path to the station? What is the status of the path on the 22 Water Street side? **A:** The path will follow North Point Boulevard. As other streets are completed, HYM will have the obligation to build up to 22 Water Street, and the remainder will be completed by the 22 Water Street developers.

Q: Is the MBTA concerned about bike access to the station bike storage facility? **A:** This is still being worked out. However, bike lanes will be provided on both East Street and North First Street connecting the path towards the bicycle storage area. The team is also exploring using signage, light, signals, and other measures to ensure safety.