

Memo

Contract No. E22PS02
Task No.: 11.2

Date: February 13, 2012
To: Mary Ainsley – MBTA Director of Design and Construction
From: Karen Arpino-Shaffer – Deputy Program Manager
Beverly Johnson – BEVCO/Public Involvement
Subject: Washington Street and Union Square Stations
February 8, 2011
cc:

ATTENDEES

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Mary Ainsley – Director of Design and Construction, Green Line Extension
Margaret Lackner – Director of Design
UGu Ewulonuu

HDR/Gilbane Project Team

Michael McBride – Program Manager; Karen Arpino-Shaffer – Deputy Program Manager; Robert Cone – Director of Design; Vanessa White – HDR/Gilbane Bryant Associates; Tom Jin – Kleinfelder/SEA; Bob Burnham – Kleinfelder/SEA; KyAnn Anderson – Kleinfelder/SEA; Deneen Crosby – CSS; Josh Burgel – CSS; Erin Kay – CSS; Todd Blake – Fort Hill Infrastructure; Beverley Johnson – Bevco; Gianluca Corsetti – Bryant Associates;

Agency/Elected Officials

Michael Glavin – City of Somerville
Hayes Morrison – City of Somerville
Sarah Spicer – City of Somerville

Media Representatives

Mekhala Roy – Somerville Journal

Other Attendees

Kristi Chase, STEP/USMS
Steve Mulder, STEP
David Boate, Gannett Fleming
Jerry Lauretano, Resident
Cindy Larson, Resident
Andrew Hovey, Boston Architectural College
Ray McFranco, Resident

Diane McFranco, Resident
Heather Von Aelst, Brick Bottom
Robert Buchanan, Resident
Marc Ebute, Transit Matters
Wig Zamore, STEP
Lynn Weissman, Friends of the Community Path
Lucas Rogers, Resident
Rob Kassor, Brick Bottom
Priscilla Chu, Brick Bottom
Cynthia Maurice, Brick Bottom
Jan Moss, Resident
Will Martin, Resident
Ellen Landrigan, Resident
Karen Molloy, STEP
Chung Lee, Resident
Paul Morgan, Resident
Khor Chabaiv, Resident
Linda Gritz, Resident
Mashaal Majid, Somerville Community Corporation
Polly Pook, Brick Bottom
Mike Katz, Resident
George Hatzis, Resident
Bill Kuttner, Resident
Joe Nissenbaum, Nissenbaum Corp.
Dave Finney, Brick Bottom
Ellin Reisner, STEP
Jeanice Shisman, Blake Architects
Jim Harvey, Holiday Inn
William Gage, Resident
Alyson Schultz, Brick Bottom
Jeremy Bowman, ESMS
John Gonzalez, DHK Architects
Steve Taylor, HMM
Tim Lanza, Resident
Nicholas Stiles, SPD
Sean Sullivan, Design Working Group
Jim McGinnis, STEP
Marc Chabot, Patrick Engineering
Janet Steins, Resident
Mimi Gravey, Union Square Main Streets
Joe Lynch, Magoun Square Neighborhood Association
Phil Brake, HNTB
Lismary Rodriguez, O/R
Kristine Gorman, STV Inc.

OVERVIEW AND WELCOME

Karen Arpino-Shaffer, HDR/Gilbane Deputy Program Manager welcomed the attendees, and introduced the key members of the project team.

Ms. Arpino-Shaffer indicated that community stakeholders provided a substantial amount of comments at the June 2011 Washington Street and Union Square Station Design Workshops, and many of these comments were helpful to the team in overcoming station design challenges, and in generating new ideas for each station. She pointed out that all community comments were recorded on “Community Comments Matrices” that were distributed at tonight’s meeting and that these documents would also be posted on the project website. Ms. Arpino-Shaffer also emphasized that the community matrices will continue to be updated and posted on the website.

Karen Arpino-Shaffer stated that each Green Line station is at a 30% level of design, and a final designer will be selected this summer to advance each station to a 100% level of design. Ms. Arpino-Shaffer emphasized that once the final designer is selected, the public process, including public meetings will continue under the management and oversight of the HDR/Gilbane project team.

Ms. Arpino-Shaffer provided an overview of key community comments and a summary of how the team addressed these issues for both Union Square and Washington Street.

OVERVIEW OF UNION SQUARE STATION COMMUNITY COMMENTS AND TEAM RESPONSE

- Karen Arpino-Shaffer highlighted the key community concerns that were raised at the June 2011 workshop as follows: (1) Station entrances and orientation; (2) Pedestrian connections and experience; and (3) Station and Bus Route connections.
- Ms. Arpino-Shaffer stated that some access challenges were associated with the Prospect Street Bridge that would be presented by Josh Burgel of CSS. She pointed out that team solutions to other key community concerns involved widening the upper plaza, designing a lower plaza for maximum flexibility that will be constructed on an interim basis pending the implementation of development projects by the City of Somerville; enlarging the lobby space; and making sure the station entry way at Prospect Street stands out once future development projects get underway.
- Karen Arpino-Shaffer also emphasized that the community’s concerns about street connections to the station is still a work in progress. She indicated that the team is working with City officials to determine street configurations and the MBTA and project team will continue to keep the community informed as these discussions advance. She also pointed out that the community’s concerns about bus connections to the station is still under review, and different options are being explored to resolve challenges associated with bus stops/operational service impacted by any proposed new street configurations. Karen Arpino-Shaffer also pointed out that key project team members are meeting with the City of Somerville on a regular basis to make sure that both stations will be able to respond to future development in the area.

UNION SQUARE SITE DESIGN PLAN

- Josh Burgel of CSS presented the Union Station site design plan. In order to establish station orientation, Mr. Burgel presented a “neighborhood access diagram” and an overview of “neighborhood characteristics,” pointing out that Union Square is a neighborhood in transition. Josh Burgel also presented a map of the City of Somerville’s “proposed redevelopment area” around Prospect and Webster Streets.
- Mr. Burgel pointed out that the station design has to have the flexibility to change with future development projects, including widening and raising the Prospect Street bridge. Additionally, Josh Burgel pointed out that once future development gets underway, the lower plaza will go away.
- Josh Burgel highlighted the following key elements of the proposed Union Square Station Site Plan for the upper and lower plazas.

- Repave Bennett Street and create new sidewalk
- Drop-Off/Pick Up Area
- Installation of trees to buffer site lines and create an overhead canopy
- Bike Parking
- Install new crosswalk at Webster and Prospect Streets
- Widen the Prospect Street Bridge and raise the bridge 2 feet to accommodate Green Line trains and provide a connection with the station entrance.

UNION SQUARE STATION DESIGN PLAN

- Tom Jin of Kleinfelder SEA presented the Union Square station design plan. Mr. Jin stated that key elements of the current design plan will concentrate pedestrian volume to the concourse level, and include two fare gate areas, one at the upper level and one at the lower level, and will also provide bike storage. He also pointed out that the design plan provides the flexibility required to extend the station to Porter Square as part of future development activities.
- Mr. Jin stated that the station was expanded to 28 feet at the bridge level. He also pointed out that the current design includes color surrounds at the windows; metal panel and curtain wall for the exterior skin, and an exterior canopy at the station entrance that will highlight the station location after future development projects are completed.

OVERVIEW OF WASHINGTON STREET STATION COMMUNITY COMMENTS AND TEAM RESPONSE

- Ms. Arpino-Shaffer highlighted the key community concerns that were raised at the June 2011 workshop as follows: (1) Station entrances and orientation to the neighborhood; (2) Pedestrian experience under the bridge; and (3) Community Path connections to the Station and neighborhood. She also pointed out that the project team has also gotten a lot of useful feedback from the Friends of the Community Path and other key stakeholder groups subsequent to the June 2011 Station Design Workshops.
- Karen Arpino-Shaffer pointed out that some of the project team solutions to community concerns include an “at-grade” Community Path connection with the station rather than proceeding with the more complicated, original plan to locate it 30 feet in the air, over the bridge. She pointed out that the circulation area will include station entrances at the east and west to accommodate pedestrian access; and a signalized intersection with an exclusive pedestrian lane.
- In order to enhance the pedestrian experience under the bridge, Ms. Arpino-Shaffer pointed out that key design elements will include: (1) Opening the bridge structure to allow light; (2) Creating reflective light on surfaces; (3) Installing glass on the back wall for pedestrian visibility; (3) Ample light for safety and security; and (4) Using lighter material.
- Ms. Arpino-Shaffer pointed out that Community Path connections to Washington Street Station and the neighborhood is still a work in progress, with a particular emphasis on security and safety; creating an at-grade bike connection, and creating a tunnel connection to the Community Path rather than a 30 foot connection over the bridge. She indicated that the MBTA and team are also exploring the future Community Path connection to the Inner Belt.

WASHINGTON STREET SITE PLAN

- Josh Burgel presented a “neighborhood access diagram.” He also pointed out that the Community Path will connect with the station, and that the City of Somerville is doing additional studies related to the development of the inner belt area. Mr. Burgel also presented an “existing conditions” plan that reflected 2 lanes on each side of the station, an existing Commuter Rail track and an existing freight track.

- Mr. Burgel pointed out that since the station will be located beneath the bridge, the wall will be pushed back 15 feet or more and the bridge will be rebuilt. He also pointed out that key site plan elements will include:
 - Maintaining the granite block look
 - Integrating a “drop-off/pick-up area”
 - Installing new signalization at the intersection of Knowlton and Tufts Streets
 - Safe pedestrian access
 - Design space for flexibility to accommodate future development in the area.
 - Provide Community Path access from Gilman Square either to Brick Bottom or under the bridge to the inner belt.
 - Construct Community Path over the top of the secondary emergency egress.
 - Install reflective paving under the bridge to add light and enhance public safety in the pedestrian zones
 - Install trees to create a canopy
 - Install parking for bikes
 - Create a safe, pleasant “under bridge” pedestrian environment
 - Install interesting pavement materials at the plaza level
 - Rebuild and repaint bridge

WASHINGTON STREET DESIGN PLAN

- Tom Jin indicated that the current design configuration involves passengers entering the station below the bridge and taking the escalator or stairs to the platform. The plan also includes community access ramps down to the “at-grade” station sidewalk. The platform is designed to be extended to accommodate 4 trains in the future. The Community Path will run alongside the station.
- Mr. Jin indicated that finish materials may consist of metal panels and glass for the exterior skin to increase the transparency of the façade and to introduce light below the bridge in pedestrian zones. Tom Jin also pointed out that stainless steel soffits with lighting and signage will be introduced in the pedestrian zones to create light and visual interest. He indicated that the interior space will likely focus on using ceramic tile and colors to enliven the space.
- Tom Jin presented station perspectives along with Goody Clancy perspectives of what the area might look like once future development occurs.

PROJECT PHASING SCHEDULE

Karen Arpino-Shaffer presented the Project Phasing Schedule as follows:

- Phase I Early Bridge Work and Demolition Package-Advertise bid in the spring 2012 to kick off construction of the Medford and Somerville bridges and demolish 21 Water Street building in Cambridge.
- Phases II and IIA-Advertise bids in 2013 for contractor so that the construction of Lechmere, Washington Street and Union Square stations can begin in mid-2013.

NEXT STEPS

Karen Arpino-Shaffer indicated that the MBTA and HDR/Gilbane team will continue scheduling the second set of station meetings for the remaining four stations as indicated below. She also emphasized the importance of meeting with direct abutters to talk about concerns and impacts and pointed out that much progress has been made on the Community Path. The community will be updated about additional progress achieved on the Community Path at a meeting in the spring. Finally, Ms. Arpino-Shaffer stated that the Maintenance Facility is at

a 15% level of design, and once the final designer is selected, the design of this facility will continue to a 100% level of design.

- March 7th, 2012-Gilman Square and Lowell Street Station Design Meeting
- March 21st, 2012-Ball Square and College Avenue Station Design Meeting
- Winter/Spring 2012-Right-of-Way/Noise/Vibration Public Meeting
- Early April 2012-Community Path Follow-Up Workshop

COMMUNITY COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

Q: The station design at Washington Street is very impressive and reflects a lot of hard work. It was suggested that the team use ornamental trees and shrubs that create fragrance to establish a more inviting area at the station and to mask unpleasant odors around the bridge. **A:** Josh Burgel responded that the tree type has not been selected and the team is looking at trees native to the area and tree types that have the durability to survive along the rail corridor.

Q: An attendee stated dismay that the design has the back of the station facing Joy Street. Concern was also expressed about the lack of a traffic light for vehicular traffic, and the design plan still does not adequately address pedestrian access along Joy Street. It was further pointed out that a very large artist community resides at Joy Street, and their connection to the station has not been enhanced. **A:** Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that it is a very valid point and the team will further review the issues raised.

Q: Under the current design, the interior space of the Washington Street Station is too narrow. Can the team design more narrow escalators to widen the space? Also, it does not appear that accessibility at Union Station has been fully explored. **A:** Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that “the Ride” will begin to address accessibility, while the MBTA and project team are talking to the City about creating accessible paths and looking at other ways to enhance accessibility at Union station. However, until the new development gets underway, it is hard to fully resolve the matter, and the team is still exploring the options. With regard to the interior space at Washington Street station, Ms. Arpino-Shaffer pointed out that the project team is trying to design the station within the confines of the MBTA right-of-way and take as little private land as possible. She emphasized that the team is working within a limited right-of-way. To alleviate the narrow interior space, Ms. Arpino-Shaffer indicated that the team is selecting materials that will make the walls as thin as possible and also looking at how to maximize corridor widths with the use of interior curtain walls.

Q: The designs are impressive and the MBTA and team are definitely on the right track to create the flexibility that will allow for the future extension to Porter Square. Please clarify the platform width in connection with the Commuter Rail, and does the emergency access require a grade change for accessibility? **A:** Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that the emergency egress and access codes have to be followed and the State inspectors prefer that steps be provided up and over the emergency access and egress. She indicated that this is still a work in progress that will be resolved as design progresses. Robert Cone, HDR/Gilbane Director of Design responded to the platform issue. He stated that some of the corridor is confined with a limited right-of-way and that a 300 foot long platform requires a curve that creates lots of challenges.

Q: The MBTA and project team have done a great job addressing community concerns. Designing a sidewalk and Community Path under the Washington Street Bridge is great. Where will the Community Path end in this design? Also, the individual supports the Urban Ring Bridge with bike/pedestrian connections to Boston and through North Point. How much storage will be provided for bikes? What is the plan to create access to Joy Street? What is the public process going forward? **A:** Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that the community’s idea of having the Green Line team lead the process in designing the Community Path was a good one. Robert Cone responded that the challenge is to create the Community Path connection at ground level, and the City of Somerville is looking at creating a roadway under the track and crossing that will eventually lead to Brick

Bottom. He stated that it is up to the City and community to decide on options to extend the Community Path, including whether the connection should be made at the Inner Belt/Urban Ring section of the corridor. In response to the question about bike storage, Mr. Cone indicated that the Washington Street Station has 50 bike racks and Union Square has 90 bike racks.

Q: The Washington Street underpass floods during heavy rain. Who would be responsible for re-doing the storm drains and upgrading utilities? Michael McBride, HDR/Gilbane Program Manager responded that the MBTA and team are looking at who owns what. The team recognizes the flooding problem and is looking at where the pump station dumps the water as a possible solution. He indicated that the problem will be addressed as part of the design process.

Q: Will the design plan address the need for lighting on the east side of Washington Street and will the pigeon problem also be addressed at the underpass? **A:** Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded yes, lighting will be included in the design plan and the pigeon problem will be addressed.

Q: A comment was made relative to the benefits of designing a raised pedestrian crosswalk with lots of lighting rather than using signalization to provide safe pedestrian passage. Also, the question was raised as to whether the design plan includes an “on-line flash board” so the community can follow the train schedule? **A:** Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that there is a website, and all Green Line documents that are shared and discussed with the community are posted, including design plans, comments, etc. and that outreach will continue during construction. Josh Burgel of CSS also responded that lighting at the pedestrian crossing would create a major challenge because it would have to be located at a slope under the bridge which would create site line and bridge clearance issues.

Q: The Union Square Station design looks good and it is wonderful that the granite will remain in place. Since Webster Street overshoots the station, what can be done to increase pedestrian/bike safety so bikers and pedestrians don't have to make an awkward left turn? Can this be alleviated by having more crosswalks on Prospect Street? Can the City/State provide assistance in creating more crosswalks even if it involves some sliver takings? **A:** Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that this issue was raised at the last community meeting and is still a work-in-progress.

Q: Great job on the at-grade Community Path at Washington Street. However, Brick Bottom still needs access to Washington Street Station, and there also needs to be a connection at Joy Street. Also, the exterior materials have a very industrial look that is not very appealing. **A:** Robert Cone responded that the design plan involves going to the Inner Belt, but it can still go through to the Fitchburg Line, traveling under the Fine Arts Building and parking lot. He emphasized that the City and community have the option to do one or the other. Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that the station exterior materials are still a work-in-progress, and final decisions will not be made until the station is close to the 60% design stage. Additionally, she pointed out that once the final designer is selected, community input and feedback will continue.

Q: Is there access for a stairway between Washington Street and the Community Path? **A:** Robert Cone responded that the MBTA has to meet strict accessibility requirements, and the creation of a stairway does not fall within the parameters of what is acceptable. Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that it is a good idea but prohibited by MBTA accessibility requirements and the ROW is tonight so there is probably not room for the ramp and a stair.

Q: Will there be an outreach program during construction? Somewhere we can get information. **A:** Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that there would be a very specific program during construction. Ms. Arpino-Shaffer introduced Beverley Johnson from Bevco as the lead for the program. She indicated that a program was being developed prior to construction and it would be rolled out to the community at that time.

Q: Raising the bridge and fronting the plaza on Prospect Street is a good idea. At Union Square a mid-block crossing may be effective. Once the materials palette is selected, it is recommended that the MBTA and Project Team establish a local design committee since any dialogue about the exterior materials and color would be worthwhile, along with the important need to address the critical need for visibility both in and out of the station, site lines and views.

Q: Combining way finding with development infill provides an opportunity for murals on the Union Square station façade to enhance visibility.

Q: In addition to the Union Square spur to Porter Square, there was early discussion about also stopping the Commuter Rail at Porter Square so passengers would not have to travel to South Station but would transfer to the Red & Green Line. What happened to this idea? **A:** Karen Arpino-Shaffer responded that making inter-connections gives people an opportunity to take the train from the suburbs into the City at South Station. She indicated that this option will be further explored down the road. A member of the audience responded that now is the time to start the dialogue. Ms. Arpino-Shaffer indicated her response was not suggesting that the time is not appropriate, but simply that this project does not preclude this option from being implemented.

Q: Make sure the station designs will be compatible with future development in the area.