

GREEN LINE EXTENSION PROJECT

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does the Commonwealth want to extend the Green Line to Somerville and Medford?

Decades of planning and analysis have demonstrated that the communities of Somerville and Medford could benefit from improved MBTA service. The municipalities are densely populated and are home to low-income and other communities of concern. Many residents travel clearly defined routes into and out of downtown Boston – the sort of trips that the MBTA is able to serve well. Residents also experience significant automobile congestion and degradation of air quality due to persistent automobile congestion. Among other problems, this makes it difficult for existing MBTA bus services to fully meet the needs of the traveling public and limits economic growth in some areas. For all of these reasons, EOT believes that an extension of the Green Line will greatly benefit the municipalities of Somerville and Medford.

Where are we in the process?

By regulation, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is required to open the Green Line Extension for passengers by December 31, 2014. The project is currently in the early phases of environmental review and conceptual engineering. EOT will submit a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (DEIR/EA) in spring 2009. (This is a combined state and federal process.) The DEIR/EA will outline the project's preferred alternative, potential benefits and possible adverse environmental effects, as well as possible changes or mitigation to reduce adverse effects. It's anticipated that the project will move into the preliminary engineering phase in summer 2009.

How has EOT sought and incorporated public input on this project?

To plan and develop the Green Line Extension Project in coordination with a wide range of public interests, EOT established a public involvement process that included an Advisory Group, open public meetings, and coordination with the staff and elected officials of Medford, Somerville, and Cambridge, as well as other stakeholders along the corridor. The Project website (www.mass.gov/greenlineextension) contains all of the materials used at the Advisory Group and public meetings, including comments and responses to comments, fact sheets, project updates, maps, and graphics. During this process, EOT has held over 100 meetings with public agencies, municipal officials, elected officials, municipal disability commissions, the Project Advisory Group, and others. In addition, the project team has also responded to many requests for information from individuals, community groups, and municipalities.

Where will the new Green Line tracks run?

The Green Line Extension will consist of two distinct branches. The "mainline," the longer of the two lines, will be constructed within the existing MBTA Lowell Commuter Rail Line railroad right-of-way and will travel north from a relocated Lechmere Station to Mystic Valley Parkway/Route 16. The shorter of the two lines will be constructed within the MBTA Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line rail right-of-way and will travel to Union Square.

Will homes be purchased or taken to make room for the Green Line?

EOT does not anticipate that any private homes will need to be purchased to extend the Green Line. In some cases, the purchase of pieces of yards or other properties – called sliver takings – may be required, and a small number of businesses may be purchased and/or relocated.

Will this project make air pollution worse?

No. In fact, the project will reduce emissions for pollutants of concern. Green Line vehicles are electric vehicles and do not produce particulate emissions. The project is expected to result in fewer automobiles on local roads. Air quality studies show that extending the Green Line will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other components of air pollution (volatile organic compounds, Nitrogen Oxides, and particulate matter).

Won't moving the Commuter Rail tracks closer to homes worsen air quality and increase diseases such as asthma for area residents?

All of the studies of local and regional air quality impacts show that extending the Green Line will improve air quality. By providing a new transportation option and taking automobiles off the road, the Green Line Extension will reduce particulate matter, one of the contributors to asthma and other diseases. In addition, the MBTA's Commuter Rail vehicles that operate in this area – which run on diesel fuel – will have to meet tougher air quality standards in the future. The DEIR/EA will include detailed air quality studies.

Why is the Extension not going all the way to West Medford?

EOT is not currently studying the possibility of extending the Green Line beyond the Mystic River into West Medford. The recommended alternative will end at Route 16/Mystic Valley Parkway. It would be more difficult - technically, financially, and environmentally – to cross the Mystic River. The crossings of the historic structures over the Mystic Valley Parkway/Route 16 and the Mystic River present a significant regulatory challenge. Additionally, north of the Mystic River, there are two at-grade crossings that pose a problem.

Why aren't you recommending any commuter rail connections?

EOT evaluated potential joint Green Line and Commuter Rail stations in the vicinity of Gilman Square and College Avenue. Constructing a Commuter Rail station at these locations would result in significant property impacts to accommodate clearance for ADA compliance and freight service.

Did EOT consider building a tunnel in any locations?

The Green Line Extension Project Team considered several potential tunnel/decking options for the project, and determined that costs and technical complications made tunneling infeasible. The tunnel analysis is available on the project website, www.mass.gov/greenlineextension, in the *Current Materials* section.

Will the stations be accessible to disabled passengers?

All of the stations will comply with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. EOT has met with disability commissions in the project area and welcomes comments and suggestions on access. Details on this access will continue to be discussed in future stages of the design process.

The logo features a stylized map of the Green Line Extension project area, showing various colored lines representing different transit routes. Labels include 'LECHMERE', 'Science Park', and 'North Station'. The text 'Green Line Extens on' is written vertically on the left side of the map.

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Are you taking into account local traffic and street crossing safety for pedestrians?

Yes. Each proposed station location is slightly different, and the Project Team has analyzed each one for automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian safety and access. The environmental review documents currently being prepared will present a traffic and pedestrian analysis along the project corridor, and future documents will contain more detailed information as design advances.

Will there be parking structures at the station sites?

No. The proposed new stations will be designed to allow residents to access the stations on foot, by bicycle, and – in some locations – by short-term vehicular drop-off/pick-up (also called kiss-and-ride). It is anticipated that the new Lechmere Station will continue to have roughly the same number of parking spaces as the existing Lechmere Station does.

What will happen to the MBTA bus lines that currently serve Somerville and Medford?

There are no current plans to eliminate or modify existing bus service in the Somerville and Medford area. Where possible, bus connections at proposed Green Line stations are being accommodated. Over time, bus routes may be modified to reflect shifting travel patterns, but that will be done after the Green Line Extension project is complete.

How is the project being planned for bicycle users and pedestrians?

EOT wants to create good bicycle and pedestrian connections to the Green Line Extension stations, fitting the stations into existing neighborhoods in ways that will conveniently serve the maximum number of possible riders. Stations will be outfitted with bicycle racks. In addition, EOT is working with proponents for the proposed Community Path to understand how designs for the two projects can best be coordinated.

Why does the project require a new vehicle support facility? Why does EOT want to locate the facility in Somerville?

A support facility is essential to store and maintain the Green Line vehicles that will serve the Extension. EOT has recommended that a mid-sized maintenance facility be constructed at the 'Yard 8' parcel in Somerville, an area that has been in railroad use for more than a century. Of the many locations considered for the support facility, this one works the best and also allows EOT to best meet the project schedule. Our Support Facility Report is available in the *Current Materials* section on the project website, www.mass.gov/greenlineextension. EOT is committed to mitigating any negative impact – which the Project Team believes will be minimal – experienced by nearby residents. This location also provides significant opportunities for new development – commercial, industrial, recreational, etc. – over and around the facility.

Commuter Rail is already noisy going through my neighborhood; does EOT plan to build sound walls or mitigate the noise that the new Green Line trains bring? How about vibration impacts?

In many areas where the Green Line Extension could be expected to produce higher noise levels than currently exist, EOT will install noise barriers or walls. With these walls in place, future noise levels are expected to be substantially lower than existing noise levels. At locations where noise barriers are not feasible or effective, EOT expects to provide sound insulation for affected buildings. Similar efforts will be directed to moderating vibration where homes or businesses are very close to the rail tracks.

Why is the Commonwealth investing in this project during a difficult economic period?

The Green Line Extension will provide important transportation, air quality, and urban redevelopment benefits, and it will also fulfill a longstanding transportation commitment to the municipalities of Somerville and Medford. The project will provide socioeconomic benefits, increased potential for local commerce, improved mobility, access to a wider range of transportation options, and less traffic congestion. For all of these reasons, the Commonwealth believes that the Green Line Extension is a worthwhile and important investment.

How does the Commonwealth plan to fund the Green Line Extension?

EOT is pursuing federal funding assistance for this project. The Federal Transit Administration New Starts program is the federal government's primary financial resource for supporting locally-planned, implemented, and operated public transit expansion projects. While EOT believes the project's benefits will make it competitive for New Starts funding, the Green Line Extension is not dependent on federal funding.

Will the Green Line Extension increase the assessments paid to the MBTA by the cities of Cambridge, Somerville, and Medford?

Municipalities in the MBTA district are charged an assessment for the transit benefits they receive. This assessment is based on population, not on the service a community receives, so additional service – like the Green Line Extension – will not increase a local assessment.

Will the Green Line Extension affect operations for the rest of the Green Line?

The headways – the time between trains – proposed for the Green Line Extension during the peak periods will be approximately 5 minutes. EOT is recommending that the existing "D" and "E" line services be extended northward to service Somerville and Medford, without modifying the existing headways of those lines. Therefore, the service headways in the Central Subway system will not change as a result of the project.

I have an idea/question/concern! How do I communicate with the Project Team?

For project information or questions, please contact Kate Fichter of the Executive Office of Transportation at katherine.fichter@eot.state.ma.us.