

GLX Design Working Group: Design Subcommittee
10/19/10

Attendance

Ellin Risner, STEP
Laurel Ruma, Medford
Mike Korczynski, Medford
Matthew Ciborowski, MassDOT
Derek Lombard, Glass Factory
Polly Cook, Brickbottom
Sean Sullivan, Somerville
Todd Kaplan, Somerville
Carolyn Rosen, GLAM
Jim McGuinnes, Somerville
Courtney, Ball Square
Chris Matthews, Cambridge
Doug Carr, Medford
Margie Lockner, MBTA

Doug Carr (of Medford) put together a matrix of GLX Design Principles (should be posted to Yahoo group). This matrix needs further development before presentation to the full Design Working Group. Need to use this as a framework and find inspiration from Charlotte, NC's design principles.

Plan for this meeting:

Brainstorm and think about filling in categories of the matrix. What categories do we want for station principles? Find categories and then fill in with ideas.

Charlotte, NC had specific categories: Land Use and Development, Mobility, Community Design with eight principles: Complementary Transit-Supportive Uses, Increase Land Use Intensity, Pedestrian/Bicycle System, Street Network, Parking, Building and Site Design, Streetscape, and Open Space.

Topic 1: transfers to other modes of transport

- Intermodal design maps should be in the station as well. How do we connect to other transit? Needs to say where the bus stop should be.
- Need to make sure transfer is safe to the mode of transport. The bus stops need to be placed for safety, comfort, access, etc. This will mean consolidation of bus service maybe, but MassDOT must be careful w/in business areas vs. residential areas.
- If bus routes change, then bus stops must be flexible; if there are multiple bus routes, there should be a single place to wait; real-time bus information is necessary too, can help plan, but need to still know where the bus stop is if you are coming out of the train stop.
- Passengers need to be aware of any service change (moving of bus stops, etc.)

Topic 2: retail services

- Will there be newspapers, coffeestands, retail offerings in the train stations? MassDOT needs to make sure there is an option if appropriate (Lechmere is a good example)
- However, we know from a recent meeting that retail at stations is very difficult for MBTA—hard to find companies to provide services at station
- Because this is a development issue; may not be appropriate for all locations and we can't always anticipate every issue (e.g., billboard, LED signs, maps, etc.)
- Perhaps there should be kiosks in business districts (for advertising). If there is a major advantage for the neighborhood, we should emphasize that to the T.
- What is relevant to the neighborhoods? Station principles and design should be relevant to the city issues. But we must be specific. It's not the MBTA's mandate, but these issues are important.

Topic 3: Building a matrix like Charlotte, NC

- A matrix makes it easy for cities and citizens to understand these design principles, as well as the MBTA and MassDOT. It's useful for everyone to know. Can't design stations without context. Must have a context.
- For example: Union Square is anticipating quite a bit of change by the city. Taller buildings and sightlines may change; new changes in zoning. So perhaps we need to also consider how tall does signage have to be to see over tall buildings.
- The stations need to be considered in context, but many people will put these design principles into action: not just city, but T, and other groups. Therefore, principles could be applied to any station, with not a lot of detail.
- Design principles are guidance and create a position to have a conversation with MassDOT, but they also go out to the larger community and then the community can give feedback.
- It would be helpful to make the design principles in to a visualization to tell the story better and improve understanding.

Topic 4: Reviewing each category of the matrix

Connectivity and Access

ped/bike/transit/community paths

- How is the station integrated from the pedestrian's point of view? E.g., find the paths of how pedestrians move for each station, which will explain specific requirements, like why we need X amount of entrances for each station. However, many stations have real challenges.
- Connectivity forces you to think about the building and how people access it. E.g., If there is no access at College Ave, then maybe the city of Medford needs to address that issue.
- Create safe access from every mode to station by identifying arterial access and then make sure they are safe; must define the zone concept or it might get lost (calm traffic vs. a very specific dangerous intersection)

- Another consideration: modeling may not include something like a steep hill, so in the real world someone would not go up and over a hill to get to the station. Geography should be taken into account. E.g., can we map out the station areas with a topo map in mind? Also, retail needs to be considered. The economic benefit for retail shops should be considered.

Open spaces

Need to have access to existing open spaces and ensure there is a good path from station to open space, but also assess current conditions and think about future opportunities

Transportation

Stations must have easy access for all

Because the stations will have small kiss-and-ride areas, as well as drop-off areas for accessible vehicles, curbcuts and other access points must be safe for all riders.

Parking

Because the stations are being built with no additional parking, accessible parking is still a necessary requirement that must be addressed.

Transition from bus/station

Bus stops should be as close to and as well connected to the station as possible, with clear connections in between station and bus stops. Improvement of current bus shelters should be considered. Traffic patterns, consolidation of bus routes, proximity, and connectivity should be considered.

Neighborhood Context

Build community

The design should plan for the future, because you don't want to preclude future opportunities.

Stations must respond to surrounding context

- Commonality of station design is important, but there are so many different stations as well as many functional requirements for a station. However, there could be variety of designs because each land space is different.
- The differences of each station and location need to be discussed further
- Ideally, station design should coordinate with the cities' existing master plans.
- However, the MBTA's pedestrian network diagram and traffic circulation pattern diagram needs to be considered to identify the areas that need improvement. MBTA does examine the "station impact zone"

Traffic and parking must not be made worse

This issue may be obvious but it needs to be addressed. Existing parking enforcement laws need to be taken into consideration, as well as lack there of.

Exterior considerations

- Kiosks, where appropriate, there should be for information and retail. Embrace as a way for community to contribute to message space.
- Think to the future for opportunities such as a shared bike program. But the space should also allow space for other alternatives, such as ZipCar/iCar, etc.

Station Design

Visually distinct

- How do you make the stations distinct (and not just with art)? They need to be recognizable from a distance. Stations should be similar enough to the neighborhood but also need to consider how they look in terms of each other.
- Consider neighborhoods designing their own station with a commonality = common materials.
- It will likely be one firm designing all stations.
- Goal: to have continuity w/out sameness