

# CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW

## Introduction

The McGrath corridor (Route 28 from Mystic Avenue/ Interstate 93- to the Cambridge city line) is antiquated—some of the structures that carry the corridor are physically deteriorated and the corridor represents an outdated approach to road building that emphasizes auto mobility without due consideration for either community impacts or access by other transportation modes. Built in the early 1950's, it pre-dates not only the Big Dig, but the Interstate 93 northbound elevated viaduct. This study is titled "Grounding McGrath" in recognition of the figurative need to "ground" the McGrath corridor in the reality of today's uses and community vision for the future, as well as the literal plan to bring the main elevated structure to grade level.

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has only recently taken control of the McGrath Highway/Route 28 corridor. As part of the 2009 Massachusetts transportation reform legislation,<sup>1</sup> ownership of the roadway and structures was transferred from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to MassDOT. Two of the structures

<sup>1</sup> MassDOT website, "In June 2009, Governor Deval Patrick signed Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2009, "An Act Modernizing the Transportation Systems of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, (as amended by Chapter 26 of the "Act.") This landmark transportation reform legislation requires that the Commonwealth integrate transportation agencies and authorities into a new, streamlined Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to be established by November 1, 2009."

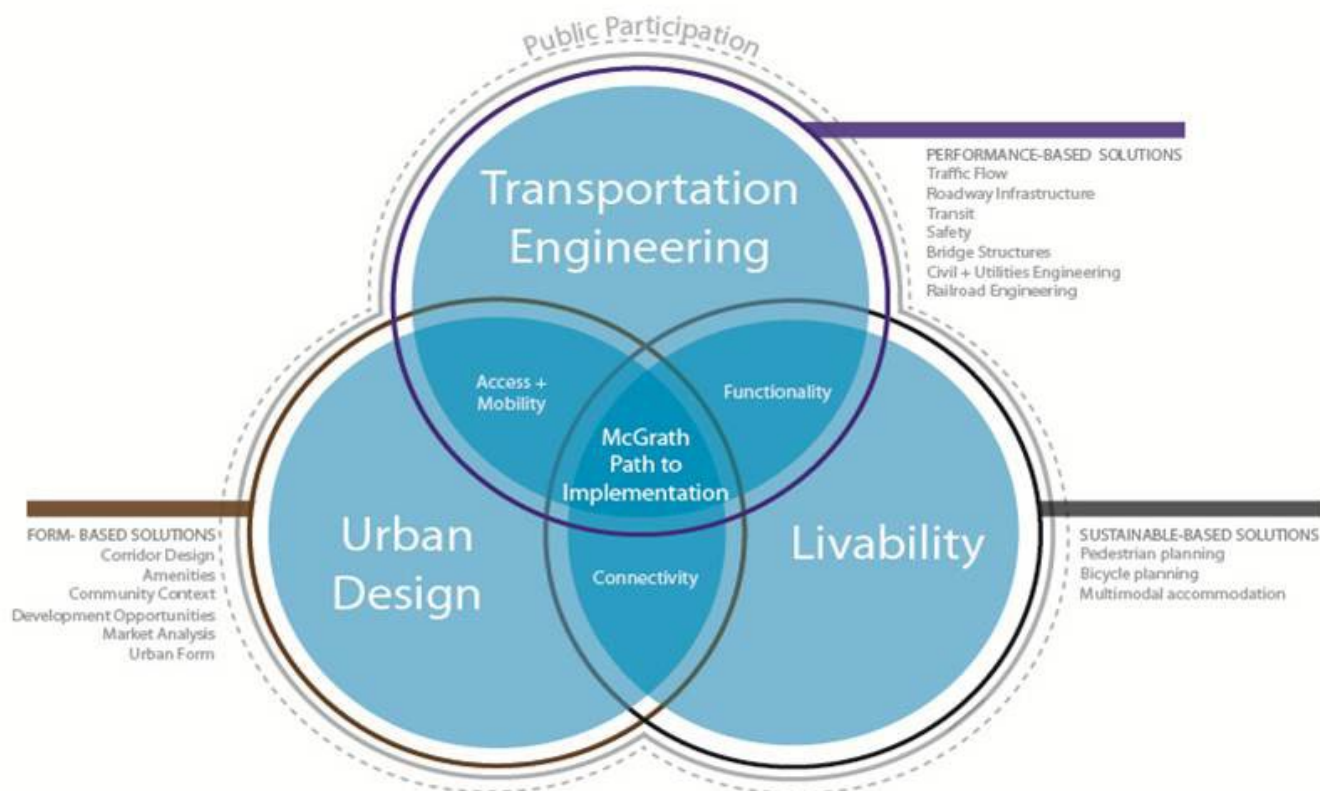


Figure 1-1: Pathway to Implementation Diagram

that comprise the elevated portions and bridges of the McGrath corridor (Gilman Street Bridge and McCarthy Viaduct) were quickly identified for upgrades under MassDOT's Accelerated Bridge Program (ABP), which seeks to repair, rehabilitate, or rebuild structurally or functionally deficient bridge structures throughout the Commonwealth.

MassDOT recognized the longstanding desire on the part of the surrounding communities to revisit the need for the corridor's elevated structures and the potentially transformative nature of the redesign of the McGrath corridor. Thus, MassDOT initiated this study – Grounding McGrath: Determining the Future of the Route 28 Corridor Study (Grounding McGrath) – which is about not only improving transportation infrastructure, but also community connectivity, accessibility across all transportation modes, economic development, and addressing safety deficiencies. The Grounding McGrath effort goes well beyond a technical challenge, as it requires a multi-faceted approach to invite community engagement and evaluate potential strategies in order to achieve a broad range of desired outcomes (see Figure 1-1).

### **Study Purpose**

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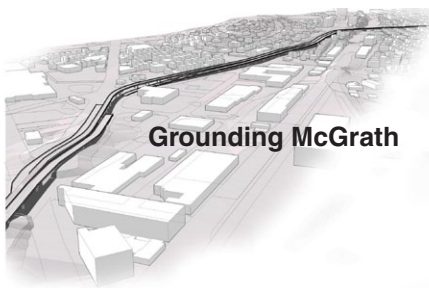
Grounding McGrath examines the potential removal of portions of the elevated roadway within the City of Somerville, while striving to enhance access for all modes of travel. The study is intended to assess the premise that removing all or a portion of the highway structure can create a unified corridor, rather than a barrier separating Somerville neighborhoods. New transportation opportunities, provided by the completion of the Central Artery/Tunnel project (i.e., The Big Dig), and planned transit and community pathway improvements, will continue to change the way people travel within and through the corridor, at the same time that the deteriorated condition of the elevated structures requires that something be done to make improvements in the corridor.

The Grounding McGrath effort seeks to not only balance the needs of transportation uses, but to facilitate connections along the corridor, and encourage development that will have a positive impact on the surrounding neighborhoods and the region as a whole.

The size of the investment necessary to establish a long-term fix for the elevated structure(s) indicates that now is the time to look at potential de-elevation of the McCarthy Viaduct, the longest segment structure in the McGrath corridor study area that carries traffic over Washington Street. Moreover, there are a number of ongoing processes and persistent issues that require a broader evaluation of the overall McGrath corridor, including:

- Two of the five structures comprising the McGrath Corridor study area – the McCarthy Viaduct and Gilman Street Bridge – were identified for repairs or replacement under MassDOT's Accelerated Bridge Program (ABP).
- The City of Somerville has continually expressed interest in removing the McCarthy Viaduct, and has undertaken a planning effort for the Inner Belt and Brickbottom Districts.
- The extension of the MBTA Green Line to Somerville and Medford, which has entered the design/construction stage, will significantly enhance public transit access and capacity to the corridor.
- MassDOT's policies – including the GreenDOT Policy, the Mode Shift Goal, the Healthy Transportation Policy Directive, and the Complete Streets design approach – call for promoting healthy, multi-modal transportation choice. These policies strongly support the surrounding neighborhood's desire to improve multi-modal transportation in the McGrath corridor, including the planning and design for the Somerville Community Path.
- MassDOT must consider not only construction costs, but also long-term maintenance costs of elevated structures, and is re-evaluating whether it is necessary or appropriate to rebuild certain deteriorating overpasses throughout the Commonwealth.

Ultimately, the purpose of the Grounding McGrath study is to establish a series of recommendations that are informed by the full range of corridor priorities, consistent with comprehensive data analysis, and supported by MassDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), corridor stakeholders, and the community as a whole. This report documents the process that has been undertaken, including civic engagement, establishment of goals and metrics, data collection and analysis, alternatives development and analysis, and recommendations. The product of this study will



be short, medium and long-term recommendations for improvements within the study area, along with an outline of the next steps that will be necessary and the parties responsible for moving these improvements forward into the project development process.

## Goals and Objectives

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MassDOT, the Working Group and the project team identified key goals and objectives for the Grounding McGrath: Determining the Future of Route 28 Corridor Study as part of an extensive public outreach and engagement process. The goals and objectives provided a means for the study to not only evaluate the alternatives, but to determine if the study is achieving its intended purpose.

The goals were based on community priorities, state and regional planning principles, MassDOT policies, City of Somerville plans and priorities, and general transportation planning principles and practice. The goals were also informed by funding constraints, environmental issues, and the findings of parallel efforts such as the HIA and IBBB Study (discussed below). Each of these four goals was a driving principle behind the project, and for each goal the project team identified a wide array of objectives by which the McGrath alternatives were evaluated. The breadth of the objectives was meant to capture the broad implications of the Grounding McGrath Study among different user groups and geographies. These goals and objectives are as follows:

1. Improve Access and Mobility  
*Move people efficiently by all modes along and across the corridor, on all local and regional desire lines*
  - » Improve regional and local travel time
  - » Improve health of residents
  - » Facilitate multi-modal transportation opportunities
2. Promote Connectivity  
*Improve the cohesion of abutting neighborhoods for the sake of community, place-making and economic development*
  - » Identify new connections
  - » Improve urban form/places
  - » Improve access to open space

- » Support and/or generate economic development

3. Improve and Balance Functionality  
*Ensure cost-effective and efficient use of many modes*
  - » Enhance safety for all modes
  - » Maintain regional travel capacity
  - » Limit impacts on surrounding roadways
4. Provide Accountability  
*Advance a design that is sensitive to the needs and desires of stakeholders*
  - » Share benefits and burdens of changes
  - » Limit impact to environment
  - » Ensure long-term corridor maintainability

The objectives were translated into quantifiable measures, which allowed the project team to compare alternatives on a wide variety of scales as objectively as possible. This multi-faceted approach identified specific differences between alternatives, in an effort to more closely align corridor designs and decisions to community goals.

## Study Process

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The Grounding McGrath study was conducted by MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning (MassDOT Planning), and assisted by an interdisciplinary project team with the Boston-based firms of McMahon Associates and Nelson\Nygaard in the lead. A Working Group was organized by MassDOT, and served to help the project team evaluate opportunities for the future of the McGrath corridor in Somerville and Cambridge, provide input on the study tasks, report back to their respective groups, and overall to guide the study process.

The study process builds on and integrates the work of the MassDOT project team, within the context of community input and other ongoing efforts. The report is organized in the same manner as the study process, which followed a series of steps executed sequentially to ultimately develop recommendations that match the defined goals and objectives. These steps are summarized below, and also represent the chapters of this document:

**Overview:**

Present study framework and process, establish the goals and objectives, more clearly define the study area, develop evaluation criteria to be used in the assessment of the alternatives, and develop a Public Involvement Plan that would ensure a robust and transparent public study process.

**Existing Conditions and Issues Evaluation:**

Establish existing conditions in the study area. Conditions include multimodal transportation analysis, land use, demographics, environmental conditions and other factors as needed. A summary of study area issues and opportunities highlights the particular challenges within each category.

**Future Year Projections:**

Develop a forecast future year of 2035, consistent with the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)'s Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the regional travel demand model managed by the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS). The 2035 future condition without any improvements or changes associated with this study – or Future No-Build condition – assumes that the McGrath corridor functions much as it does today. The Future No-Build condition assumes that no alternatives (including any potential change to the elevated structures or lane configurations) are to be implemented within the McGrath corridor, but accounts for the expected changes in population and employment and the implementation of other transportation projects in the region.

**Alternatives Development:**

A wide range of alternative design scenarios are proposed to address the challenges that have been identified in the study area. These options are then discussed through a community engagement process and put through a screening process to eliminate infeasible options, combine desirable elements from different alternatives, and narrow down the range of options. The final alternatives are then developed to the level that they can be measured using the established evaluation criteria.

**Alternatives Analysis:**

In this step, detailed evaluation of the alternatives is conducted and results are measured relative to the

evaluation criteria. Alternatives are evaluated in a future “horizon” year (2035). The alternatives analysis includes the No-Build alternative as a baseline for comparison.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the analysis of alternatives, a series of recommendations are proposed for short, medium and long range implementation. This section also identifies the issues associated with implementation, and steps along the way toward an improved McGrath corridor.

All these study phases were completed in consultation with the Working Group, and results have been presented to the general public at advertised public informational meetings. Additional details on the public participation process are included in this chapter, within the public outreach section.

**Study Area**

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The study area for the Grounding McGrath study is the Route 28 corridor from Broadway in Somerville in the north to Land Boulevard in Cambridge in the south (see Figure 1-2). It comprises McGrath Highway and Monsignor O'Brien Highway. McGrath Highway runs from the junction with Mystic Avenue/Interstate 93 to the north (beyond which Route 28 is named the Fellsway) to the municipal boundary with Cambridge to the south. Route 28 is Monsignor O'Brien Highway through Cambridge to the municipal boundary with Boston. For purposes of this study, the entire length of Route 28 within the study area is generally referred to as the “McGrath corridor.” Figure 1 -3 shows the study area, while Figure 1-4 shows the central portion of the corridor (focus area) from an oblique angle to better represent the varying elevated structures that are the principal focus of the study alternatives and analysis.

The study process and approach for Grounding McGrath was to evaluate the corridor as a whole, while investigating both regional impacts and design solutions that may vary on a block-by-block basis. Balancing the desires of a future for the study area that supports community development objectives, with the associated larger transportation, mobility, environmental and public health goals was the ongoing and primary challenge of this effort. Thus, even though the feasibility and cost estimates for either retaining or removing the elevated



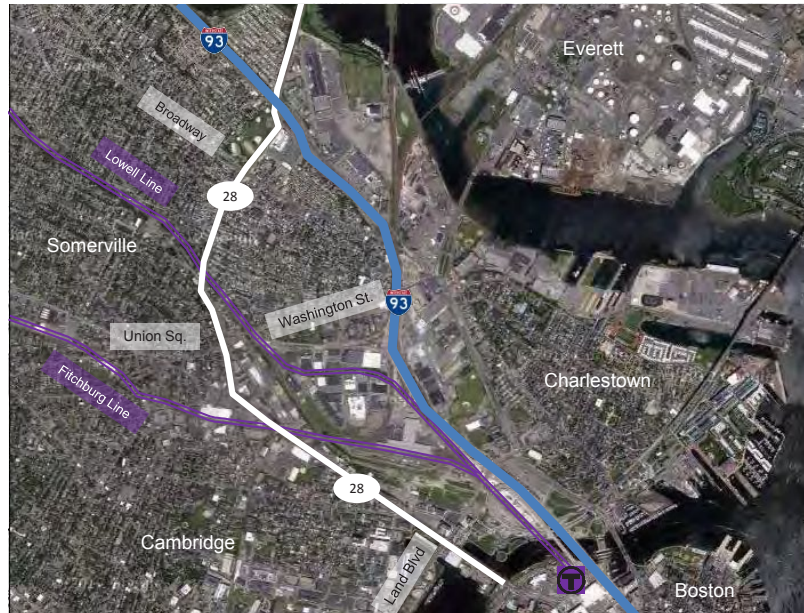


Figure 1-2: Route 28

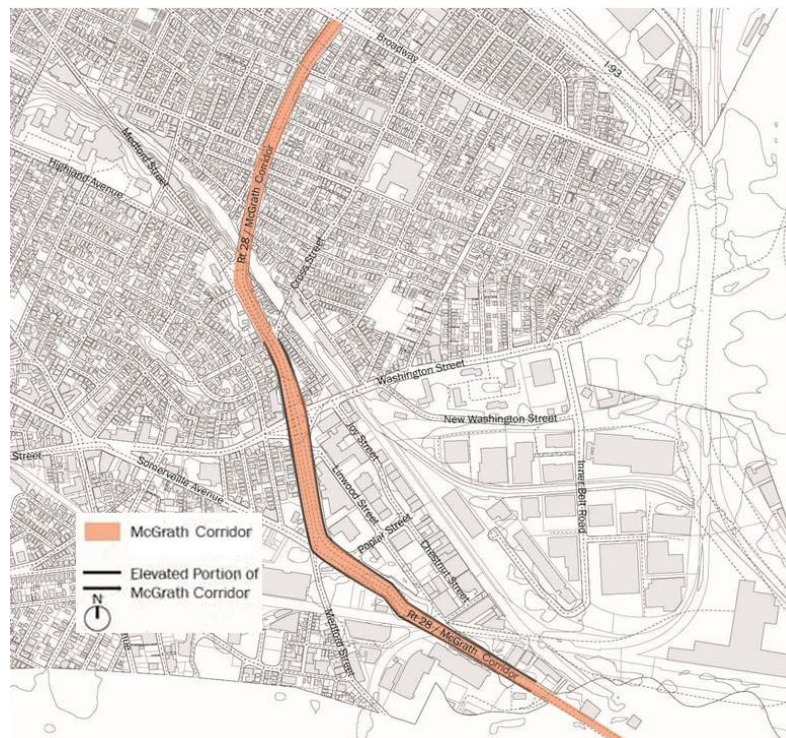
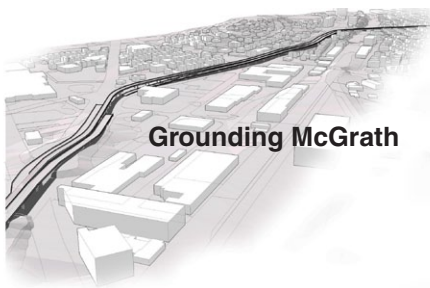


Figure 1-3: Study Area



Figure 1-4: Focus Area





portions of the McGrath corridor focus on the roadway itself, the benefits and impacts are analyzed over a broader area. Mobility for all modes of travel on both a local and regional level were considered, including the impacts on cross streets.

## Background

The McGrath corridor predates the Interstate 93 northbound elevated viaduct and for many years was the primary route from points north to and from Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. With a combination of elevated structures, at-grade roadways, and bridges over active rail lines, the corridor currently includes a combination of complex intersections, bypasses, and challenging crossings. Along with adjacent industrial areas and rail lines, McGrath's elevated structures

for motorists have long severed neighborhoods of Somerville and Cambridge from each other.

The bridges and other structures that carry the McGrath corridor also have specific names, as shown in Figure 1-5. From north to south, the first is the "Gilman Street Bridge," which carries the McGrath corridor over Gilman Street in Somerville. Immediately south of the Gilman Street Bridge is the Lowell Line Bridge, which carries the McGrath corridor over the MBTA Lowell Commuter Rail Line. The McGrath corridor is at grade at the intersection with Medford Street/Somerville Avenue. The next structure is the "McCarthy Viaduct," a viaduct that carries the McGrath corridor over Washington Street and extends to carry McGrath southbound over the Medford Street/Somerville Avenue intersection. The final structure is the "Squire's Bridge", which carries the McGrath corridor over the MBTA Fitchburg Commuter

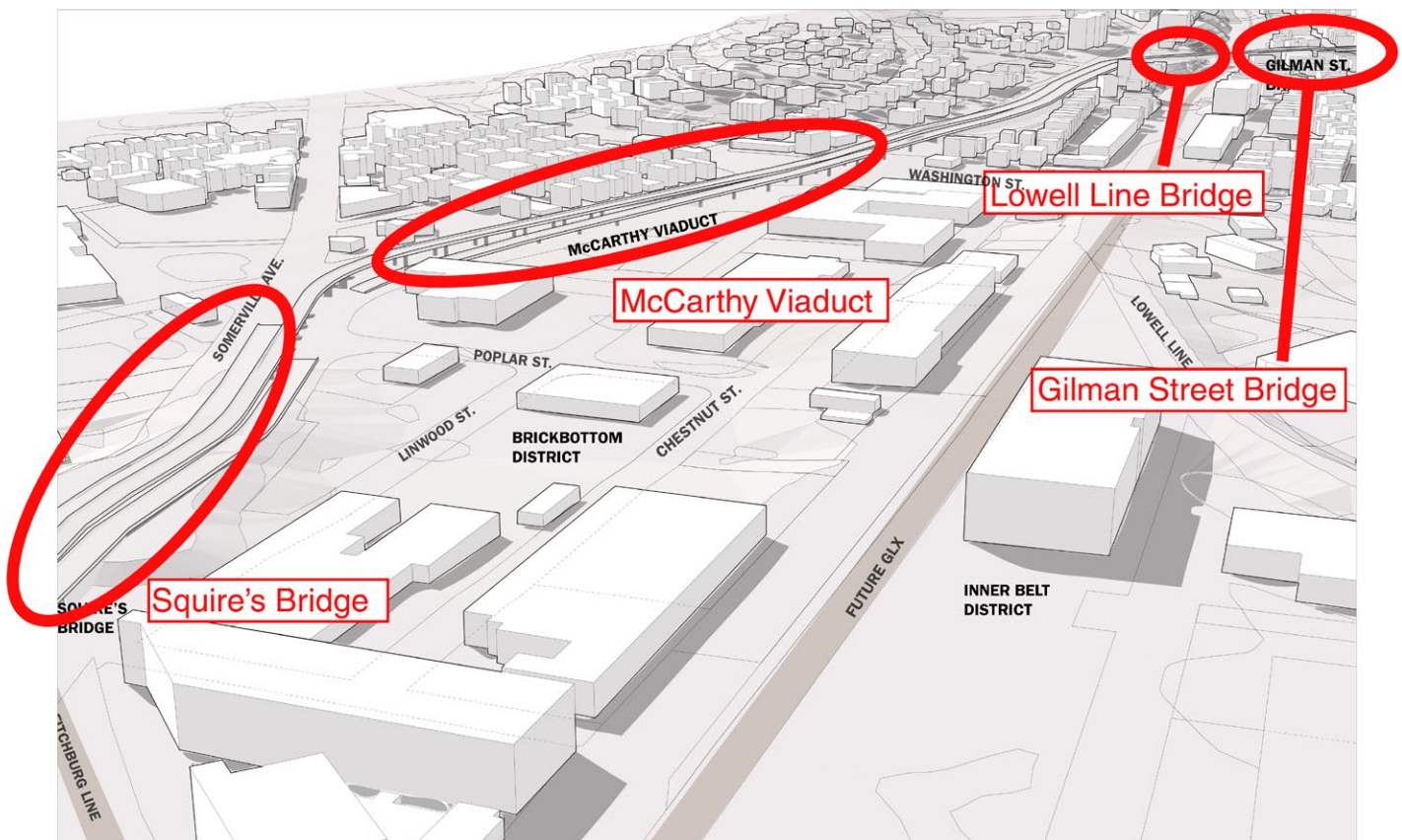


Figure 1-5: Bridges and Structures of Route 28

Rail Line. Since both the roadway and the structures have specific names, it is possible to use both names in referring to the same segment (e.g. the McCarthy Viaduct carries the McGrath corridor over Washington Street).

Massachusetts State Route 28 within the study area is functionally classified by MassDOT as an “other freeway.” Route 28 is also classified as “Other NHS Route” within the National Highway System (NHS) by the Federal Highway Administration.<sup>2</sup> The NHS funded roadway network in Massachusetts represents all Interstates, most of the principal arterial system, and a small portion of the urban collectors.<sup>3</sup> Proposed modifications to the

<sup>2</sup> <http://services.massdot.state.ma.us/maptemplate/roadinventory>

<sup>3</sup> Road Inventory Year-End Report, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, 2010

NHS must meet criteria and enhance characteristics of the NHS, and be implemented in cooperation with local and regional officials.<sup>4</sup>

### Demographics

Changes are occurring rapidly on and along the McGrath corridor. The study area includes adjacent neighborhoods comprising 13 census tracts in Somerville and Cambridge (see Figure 1-6). In 2010, the population in this area was 56,560 residents, a 3.6 percent increase since 1990. The focus area of the elevated portions between the Lowell Line Bridge and Squire’s Bridge – directly abuts four census tracts in Somerville. In the focus area, the population was 14,860, which has grown even more rapidly -- at a 4.1 percent rate between 1990

<sup>4</sup> Federal-Aid Policy Guide, December 19, 1997, Appendix D, Section 103(b) of title 23, U.S.C

Route 28 Corridor for Demographic, Economic Study

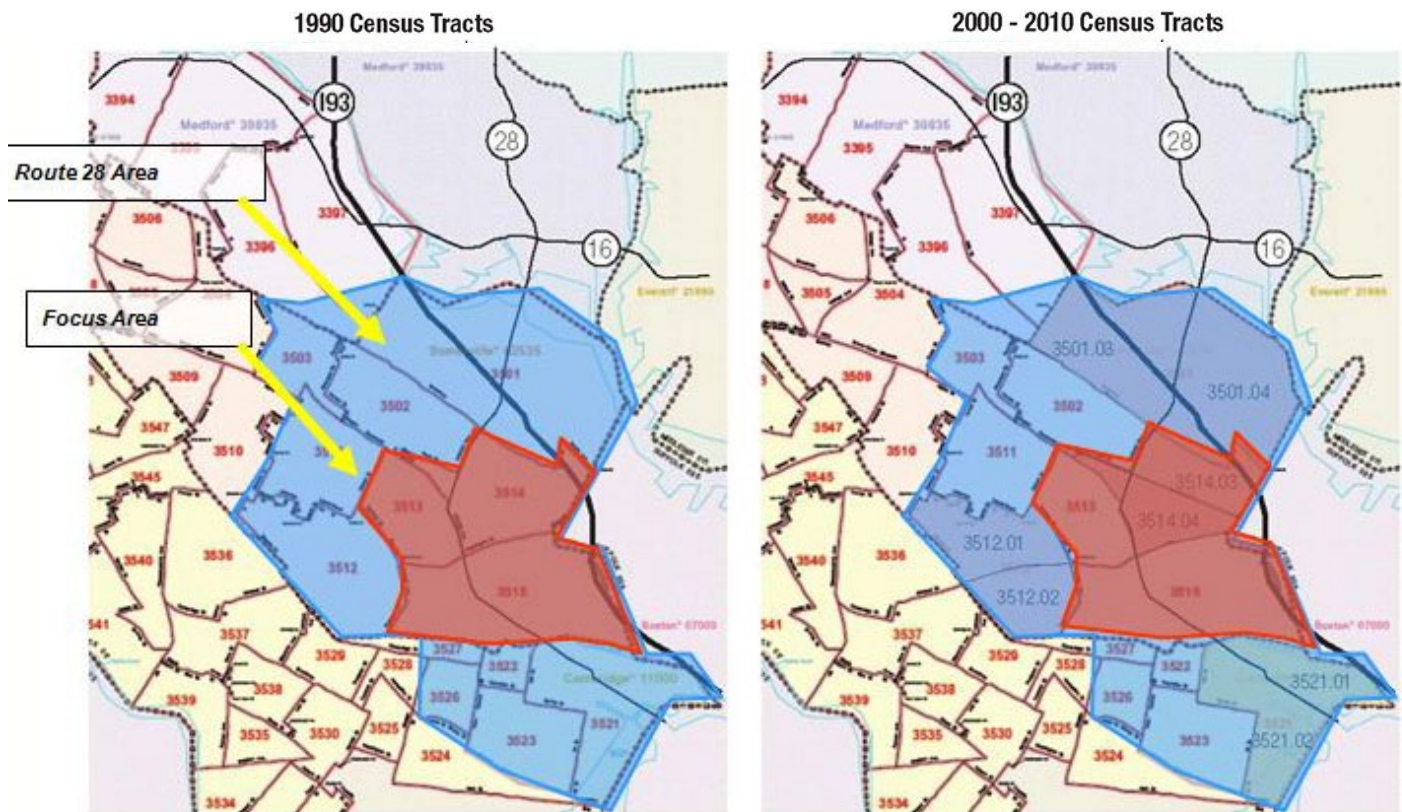
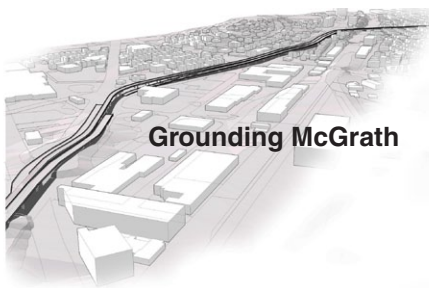


Figure 1-6: Census Tracts





and 2010 – than the overall study area. This increase is significant, especially compared with a 1 percent decrease in the overall Somerville population over that same period. Interestingly, this population is also diversifying rapidly in both the larger study area and the focus area. There has been significant growth in the population of Black, Asian and Hispanic residents. The White population has declined over the last 20 years, from 88 percent of residents to 64 percent, while the Hispanic population grew to 13.9 percent from 2 percent over that period.<sup>5</sup>

While many of the large industrial employers have moved from the corridor, the area still retains its industrial character and there is still a robust employment base within the study area. In this same area, there are over 23,000 employees, working in over 1,300 establishments. Eighty percent of these businesses employ less than 50 people. The largest concentration of employees, 31 percent, is in the Finance, Insurance and Real Estate Sector. In total, businesses in the study area represent almost \$1 billion (\$983 million) in payroll in 2010.

### MassDOT Policy Support

MassDOT policies are consistent with and strongly support the aims of the Grounding McGrath study to provide a balanced transportation system that supports transportation access in all modes, as well healthy, vital neighborhoods. These supporting policies include:

- The GreenDOT Policy, MassDOT's comprehensive sustainability initiative that is designed to integrate environmental responsibility into all MassDOT functions. GreenDOT is driven by three primary goals: reduce greenhouse gas emissions; promote the healthy transportation options of walking, bicycling, and public transit; and support smart growth development.
- Complete Streets, the comprehensive multi-modal design philosophy in MassDOT's Project Development and Design Guide. Complete Streets calls for safe and appropriate accommodation of all roadway users, and an approach to roadway design that works "from the outside in," giving critical early consideration not only to motor vehicles, but also pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit riders.
- The Healthy Transportation Compact, an inter-

agency group established by the 2009 Transportation Reform Law that established MassDOT, which includes MassDOT, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The Healthy Transportation Compact, which is discussed in more detail below, is designed to promote healthy lifestyles through transportation system design and operations that facilitate walking, bicycling, and other active transportation modes.

- The Healthy Transportation Policy Directive, which builds upon MassDOT's Complete Streets guidelines, GreenDOT Policy, and Healthy Transportation Compact by requiring that all MassDOT projects not only accommodate, but actively promote healthy transportation modes.
- The Mode Shift Goal, announced by MassDOT in October 2012, is an initiative to triple the share of travel by bicycling, transit and walking in Massachusetts by 2030. In collaboration with regional transportation partners, community leaders, advocates and customers, MassDOT will reconsider what is possible for the Commonwealth's transportation system and imagine healthier, greener and cleaner mobility. The Mode Shift Goal is featured in MassDOT's GreenDOT Implementation Plan.

### Parallel Planning and Implementation Processes

The Grounding McGrath study incorporated the changing nature of the corridor into its analyses. All alternatives include land use and demographic projections into a future horizon year (2035). More importantly, the Working Group, City of Somerville, MassDOT and many stakeholders view this study and the potential transformation of the McGrath corridor as a critical element in realizing the potential of the area. Future analysis includes a series of changes and improvements across alternatives, including:

- Land use projections/changes;
- Transportation access improvements, in particular the Green Line Extension (GLX), with stations at Washington Street and in Union Square; and
- Demographic and population changes.

The Grounding McGrath study built upon and coordinated with the work of several parallel and previous efforts. These informed the existing and future

<sup>5</sup> United States Census data

conditions evaluation, influenced the goals and measures developed, and worked in tandem with the alternatives developed. These processes included:

#### ***Toward a Route 28 Corridor Transportation Plan: An Emerging Vision, CTPS***

Prior to the transfer of ownership of the McGrath corridor from DCR to MassDOT, the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) completed a preliminary evaluation titled “Toward a Route 28 Corridor Transportation Plan: An Emerging Vision,” in December 2008. In many ways the Grounding McGrath study is a follow-up to the CTPS effort, which provided a conceptual plan for the Route 28 corridor in Somerville. The report provided an initial evaluation and developed general recommendations to guide current and future public investment and private development projects along the corridor, as defined by the Route 28 Corridor Advisory Committee.

#### ***Green Line Extension (GLX)***

MassDOT and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) are working jointly on this important project to extend the MBTA Green Line service from a relocated Lechmere Station in East Cambridge, to Union Square in Somerville and College Avenue in Medford. The GLX will bring greatly improved public transit service to densely populated areas of Cambridge and Somerville.

The GLX includes a new station at Washington Street, directly abutting the study area, as well as a station in Union Square. The Washington Street Station near Brickbottom, would be located just east of the McGrath corridor, at the corner of Washington Street. The station would be on the elevated railroad abutment and extend south from Washington Street towards Poplar Street. The City of Somerville is working closely with the MBTA on the specifics of the design, and a likely local bus connection on the Inner Belt (east) side of the station. The Washington Street Station would increase transit use in the area, and create additional pedestrian desire lines and crossings of the McGrath corridor.

Figure 1-7 shows the proposed alignment of the GLX.

#### ***Inner Belt/Brickbottom Study***

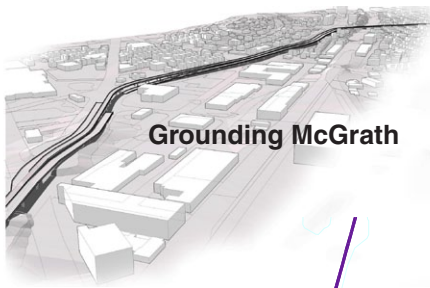
The City of Somerville's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) has undertaken a major planning initiative for the area known as the Inner Belt and Brickbottom Districts, a 160-acre light industrial zone located in the southeast corner of Somerville, adjacent to McGrath Highway along its eastern edge. The goal of the redevelopment of Inner Belt/Brickbottom (IBBB) is to expand the land uses of the area and to improve and increase access to the Districts by reconnecting it to the rest of Somerville, as well as to Boston and Cambridge. The defined goals of the IBBB study are to:

- Create mixed use development;
- Enhance transit access;
- Rework/reconnect infrastructure;
- Strengthen the public realm by creating open space;
- Connect to a network of accessible districts; and
- Leverage life sciences and institutional convergence with neighboring university facilities.

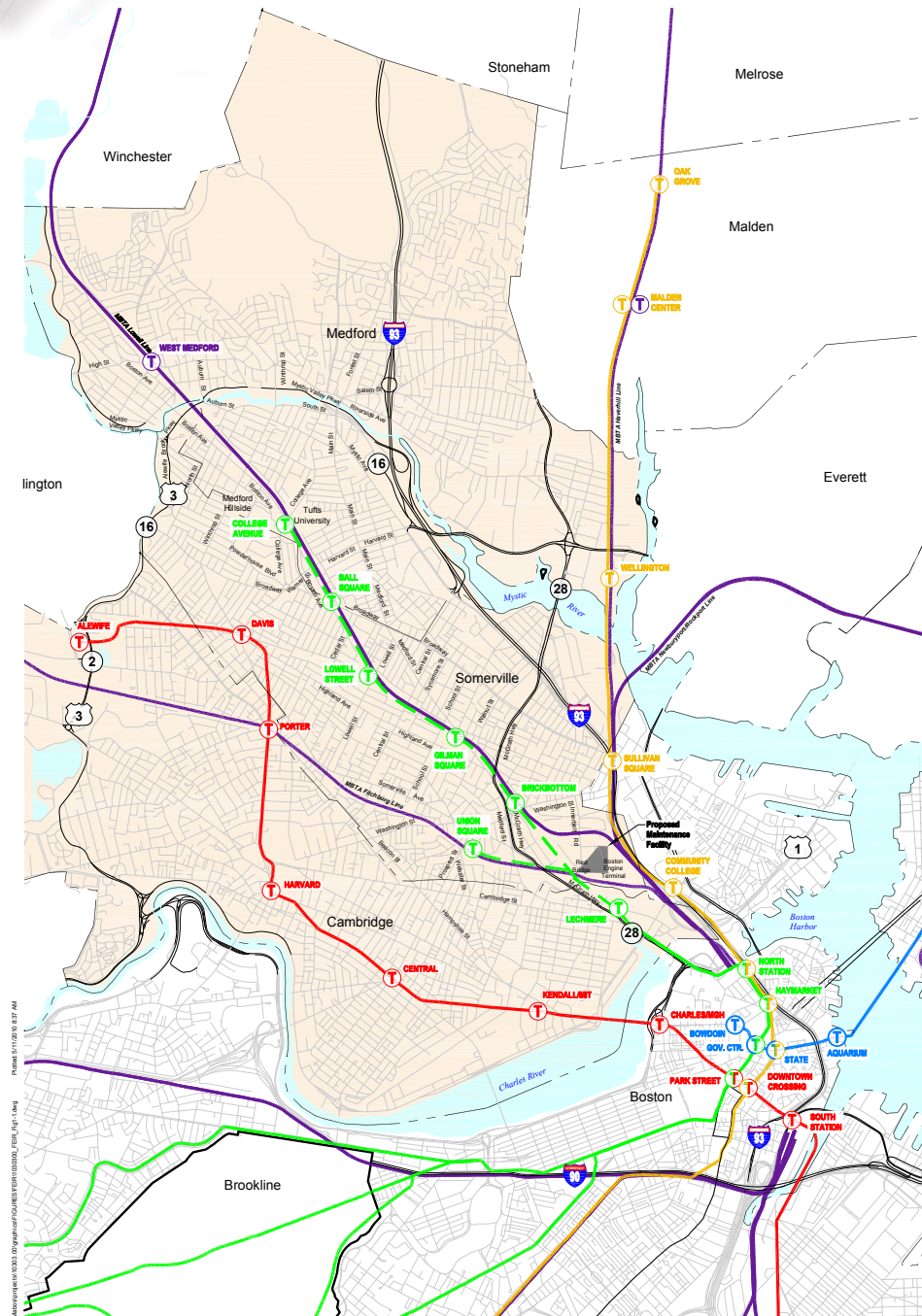
The land use projections, transportation access issues, and future development of a Green Line station explored through the IBBB Study were incorporated in the Grounding McGrath study. Additionally, as the IBBB and Grounding McGrath studies are integrally linked and were conducted in parallel, much of the transportation data developed (including traffic analysis networks) for each was shared and coordinated. Regional travel modeling analysis, conducted by CTPS, was also shared, and the overall results and analysis were reported in a similar fashion. The IBBB Study also generated an additional modeled alternative that builds off the work completed in the Grounding McGrath study.

#### ***Somerville Community Path***

The existing Somerville Community Path extends from Cedar Street to Grove Street in Davis Square, where it connects to the Linear Path, which in turn connects to the Alewife area in Cambridge and the Minuteman Bikeway rail trail. The extension of the Community Path through the McGrath corridor to Cambridge and beyond offers the opportunity to provide new connections for many Somerville residents, to connect the Minuteman Bikeway with the Paul Dudley White path network along the Charles River, and to enhance regional trail network connectivity. It is a high priority for both Somerville and



Grounding McGrath



**Legend**

- MBTA Green Line
- MBTA Orange Line
- MBTA Red Line
- MBTA Blue Line
- MBTA Silver Line
- MBTA Commuter Rail Line
- Green Line Proposed Project
- Proposed Station
- Proposed Maintenance Facility

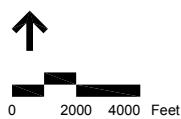


Figure 1-7: Green Line Extension



the region at large. The City of Somerville, the “Friends of the Community Path,” and numerous other advocacy groups, have been working to provide an ultimate connection between the Minuteman Bikeway and the Charles River path networks.

MassDOT recognizes that the Community Path extension is a significant component in meeting the Commonwealth’s commitments to enhancing non-auto mode share, as well as meeting health and environmental goals. Thus, current designs for the MBTA’s planned GLX include a continuation of the Community Path along the GLX right-of-way south to Inner Belt Road, with associated connections to ground level at Washington Street and Poplar Street. Providing

enhanced bicycle and pedestrian access from the surrounding neighborhood to the proposed Community Path extension was a primary feature of all developed alternatives for Grounding McGrath.

### **Additional Projects**

Within the project study area, there are a number of infrastructure projects and adjacent development districts already being studied, as shown in Figure 1 -8.

### **Health Impact Assessment**

At the Project’s initiation, the Grounding McGrath study was selected by the Commonwealth to be a pilot project on which to conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). An HIA is a process through which the anticipated

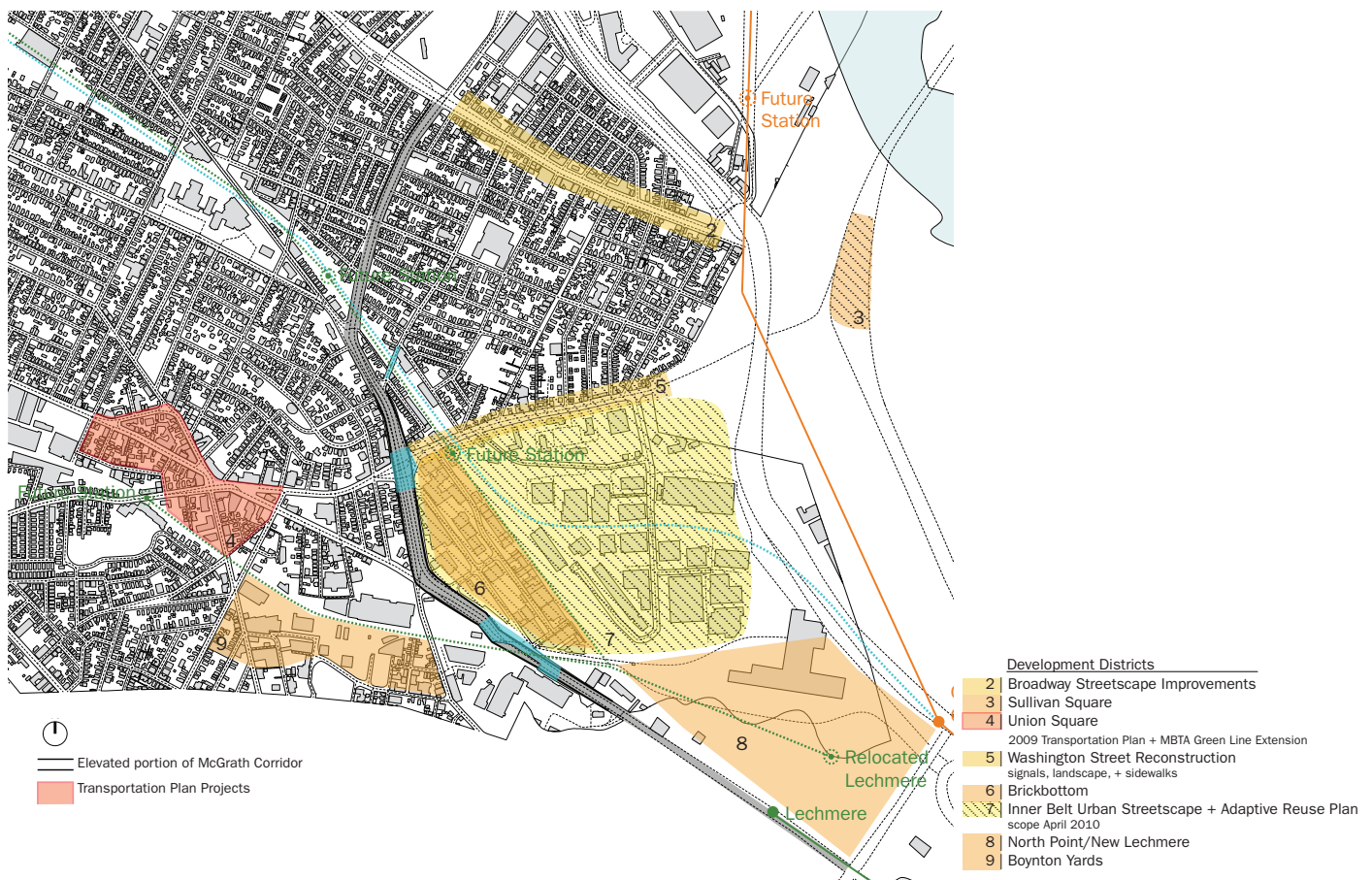
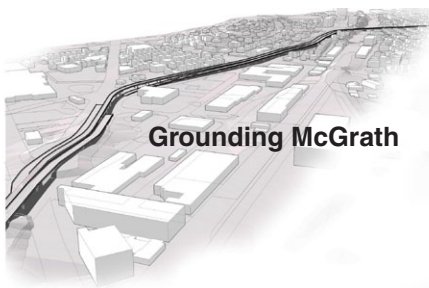


Figure 1-8: Coordinated Development and Infrastructure



Grounding McGrath

public health impacts of a project can be quantified and incorporated into the decision making process.

The built environment in which we live, work and play has a tremendous impact on our collective health. It is becoming increasingly evident that it is easier to stay healthy when our surrounding environment enables healthy living. This means having places where we can easily and safely walk, run or bike; having access to amenities such as healthy food, affordable housing, transportation, and recreational opportunities; and enjoying the benefits of cleaner air and a safer environment. Recognizing that policy makers make choices everyday that should take public health into account, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts established the Healthy Transportation Compact (HTC). The HIA is a provision of the Healthy Transportation Compact section of the Transportation Reform Law.

The Healthy Transportation Compact is a key requirement of the landmark transportation reform legislation signed into law in June 2009. The HTC is co-chaired by the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Health and Human Services and includes the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs, MassDOT Highway Administrator, MassDOT Transit Administrator, and Commissioner of Public Health. The inter-agency initiative is designed to facilitate transportation decisions that balance the needs of all transportation users, expand mobility, improve public health, support a cleaner environment and create stronger communities.

Source: MassDOT website, <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/GreenDOT/HealthyTransportationCompact.aspx>

An HIA provides the methodology to measure and incorporate the impacts of public health in decision making. Using a systematic process, a HIA assimilates data from a wide range of sources to ensure that the often overlooked public health implications, particularly to vulnerable populations, are incorporated into a public policy decision making process. A separate report on the HIA has been prepared as part of the Grounding McGrath study effort. That report details the process and outcomes of the HIA analysis conducted, and

incorporates the alternatives and data included in this report. The primary steps used to conduct an HIA are briefly outlined below:

1. **Screening** – Determines the need and value of a HIA
2. **Scoping** – Determines which health impacts to evaluate, methods for analysis, and a workplan
3. **Assessment** – provides:
  - a. A profile of existing health conditions
  - b. Evaluation of potential health impacts of a public policy or project
4. **Recommendations** – Provide strategies to manage identified adverse health impacts
5. **Reporting** – includes:
  - a. Development of the HIA report
  - b. Communication of findings and recommendations
6. **Monitoring** – tracks:
  - a. Impacts of the HIA on decision-making processes and the decision
  - b. Impacts of the decision on health determinants

The Grounding McGrath study was chosen as the subject for a pilot HIA for the following primary reasons:

- As a highway de-elevation study, it represented potentially transformative change.
- It bisects the eastern part of Somerville, the most densely populated city in Massachusetts.
- It is a major corridor with local and regional costs and benefits.
- The corridor abuts environmental justice communities.
- The Grounding McGrath study had an established Working Group and civic engagement process, and was being conducted in coordination with ongoing municipal efforts, which ensured robust public involvement.
- When the subject for the pilot HIA was being selected, the Grounding McGrath study was still in the beginning stages, when the HIA process could be integrated relatively smoothly.

The HIA was conducted in parallel with the Grounding McGrath study, and completed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). The draft report,

*Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Grounding McGrath Study*, was released for public comment April 2013. The HIA was funded separately through a grant program from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts. The findings of the HIA are documented in Chapter 5 – Alternatives Analysis and Chapter 6 – Recommendations of this report.

### **Public Outreach**

MassDOT and its project team developed and implemented a robust program of community involvement during the Grounding McGrath study. Public outreach for the study had three principal goals:

- To provide an interactive, collaborative and credible public process;
- To equip the project team with ideas and recommendations from the public that will inform the study; and
- To solicit input from local residents and businesses, local and regional government agencies and interest groups, and to provide strategies to reach the wider public and highway users.

MassDOT conducted all meetings in accessible locations and provided opportunities to request accommodations for participants, including interpreters, audio equipment and large print materials.

### **Working Group**

The work of the project team was supplemented by a Working Group, whose members included elected and municipal officials and representatives from state agencies, local advocacy groups, planning organizations and local architects. A full list of the Working Group membership is included in Appendix A. Members represented their communities, shared project information with their constituents, and reported feedback at Working Group meetings. Members also represented other ongoing planning processes and some were responsible for ongoing coordination between projects.

At the beginning of the project, MassDOT invited key members of the community to join the Working Group.

While membership in the Working Group was limited to a small group, MassDOT and the project team worked to broaden participation beyond traditional choices, and all Working Group meetings were open and often attended by members of the general public. The Working Group met seven times at key points throughout the project, providing feedback and contributing to the direction of the project:

- June 29, 2011
- August 3, 2011
- December 12, 2011
- March 7, 2012
- September 27, 2012
- February 13, 2013
- April 25, 2013

Additional project meetings were held with the City of Somerville and the Department of Public Health to coordinate efforts with the IBBB Study and the HIA, respectively.

### **Public Meetings**

A public meeting was held on September 20, 2011, at the conclusion of Task 2 (Existing Conditions and Issues Evaluation). In this meeting, the project team presented the results of the initial study area evaluation, existing conditions, and goals and objectives development, including the working group process. There was an opportunity for public questions and comments, and the public comments were taken into consideration during subsequent stages of the analysis. A second public meeting was held on May 15, 2013, to review the results of the Alternatives Analysis and Draft Recommendations.

### **Website**

A project webpage was provided on the MassDOT website, [www.massdot.state.ma.us/grounding mcgrath](http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/grounding-mcgrath), which included:

- Information about upcoming meetings;
- All project presentations;
- Summary notes for all meetings/workshops on the project; and
- A way to sign up to be added to the project distribution list.