

**GREEN LINE EXTENSION PROJECT
OCTOBER 2, 2018 COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEETING – SUMMARY MINUTES**

LOCATION OF MEETING: GLX Project Office, 200 Inner Belt Rd, 3rd Floor, Somerville, MA 02143

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: October 2, 2018; 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

ATTENDANCE:

CWG Members: Michaela Bogosh (Magoun Square), Elliot Bradshaw (Brickbottom), Jennifer Dorsen (Somerville Ball Square), Ryan Dunn (Magoun Square), Mark Johnson (DivcoWest), Jim McGinnis (Union Square), Justin Moeling (Gilman Square), Laurel Ruma (College Ave), Jim Silva (Medford Ball Square)

MassDOT/MBTA: John Dalton – MBTA GLX Program Manager, Melissa Dullea – MBTA Senior Director of Service Planning, Kurt Echols – MBTA System-wide Accessibility

GLX Constructors (GLXC): Hannah Brockhaus, Nate Curtis, Jeff Taylor, John West

GLX Project Team: Randy Henke, Martin Nee, Joe Sgroi, Steve Taylor

Other Attendees: Viola Augustin (City of Somerville), Todd Blake (City of Medford), Amy Eastment (Brickbottom), Tim Dineen, Zoe Iacovino (Office of State Senator Jehlen), Mark Niedergang (Somerville Board of Aldermen), Andrew Reker (City of Cambridge), Lynn Weissman (Friends of the Community Path)

PURPOSE: The GLX Community Working Group (CWG) was formed to help engage and foster communication with the communities along the GLX corridor by meeting with representative members (both residents and officials) of Cambridge, Somerville, and Medford.

BACKGROUND: The Green Line Extension (GLX) Project is an initiative of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), in coordination with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The project intent is to extend existing MBTA Green Line service from Lechmere Station through the northwest corridor communities of Cambridge, Somerville, and Medford. 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.

PRESENTATION:

Marty Nee, Outreach Coordinator for the GL team, gave an update on GLX public outreach events including:

- Gilman Square Block Party on September 15 on Richdale Avenue in Somerville which had a Touch-a-Truck event provided by GLXC
- SomerStreets Tabling Session on September 16 on Highland Avenue in Somerville
- GLX Public Meeting hosted by Somerville and Medford on September 24 at the St. Clement Parish Hall in Medford – concerning bridge closure and detours
- Fluff Festival Tabling Session on September 22 at Union Square in Somerville – roughly 220-230 people stopped by the table to discuss GLX
- Ball for Squares on September 30 at Ball Square – 450-500 people stopped by the table to discuss GLX

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- GLX participation in a Somerville Chamber of Commerce Meeting in September
It was noted, these events are compliment more formal public meetings adding an additional layer of communications with the communities served by the project. The GLX team asked members to keep the team apprised of future opportunities to participate in.

John West the Project Manager for GLX Constructors (GLXC) gave a project design and construction update covering:

- College Avenue Station designs (see presentation)
- Retaining and sound wall design information and examples – goal is to be done with wall designs by next summer
- Broadway Bridge closure planned for early 2019
 - GLXC is in discussion with MassDOT about shutting down the Commuter Rail to speed the safe and efficient demolition the bridge
- An update on track shift – goal is to have Commuter Rail line in its new alignment by end of month; a track throw is expected to occur the weekend of October 13 and 14
- Homans Building demolition is targeted for abatement work to begin late November 2018 for 3 to 4 weeks; historic lion's head and other architectural fixtures have been removed and are to be turned over to City of Somerville for preservation
- Demolition of Third Avenue buildings for future location of Vehicle Maintenance Facility is targeted to start in October 2018
- Abatement and demolition of 3 buildings at future Ball Square Station site (Broadway at Boston Avenue) is targeted for late December 2018

Marty Nee said the GLX team will put out a 2019 CWG meeting schedule soon. After discussion with members, it was decided to continue alternating between mornings and evenings and to hold the meetings at GLX office. The team is also open to suggestions from members about moving meetings to alternative locations from time to time.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION/ISSUES:

Member Discussion

College Avenue Station Designs

It was suggested that audio speakers be visually added to the station canopy renderings and that trees be removed from the rendering where they don't currently exist.

The GLX team clarified the station is designed with an at grade platform at the grade of the railway not at the grade of Boston Avenue.

In response to a member's question about accessibility options for boarding the trains from the platform, the project clarified accessibility will be the same as any other stations along the Green Line.

The GLX team clarified that the station design on slide 10 of the presentation is looking southward down the platform with the retaining wall on the right.

A member asked how close the retaining wall is to the track at College Avenue station and if a person could get between the train and wall. The project team explained that the center line of the track would be about 8 or 9 feet from the wall.

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It was inquired if the low floor trains would meet accessibility requirements. The project team explained there will be a step up (8 inches from top of rail) to the Green Line car and that ramps would be deployed when needed as they are at other current Green Line stops. It was also noted that the new Type-9 Green Line trains have ramps that come extend automatically when needed from under the vehicle doors.

It was inquired if there would be raised handicap access platforms. The team explained that access to the trollies would meet the same accessibility requirements as the rest of the existing Green Line stations. There will be one step up from the platform to the floor of the trolley.

In response to an inquiry the project team clarified that the station platform at College Avenue Station would be accessed by stairs and redundant elevators (no escalators).

It was asked how emergency egress would work at College Avenue Station. The team explained an area of refuge is being designed north of the platform to hold an appropriate number of people if there is an emergency in the station. This detail will be presented to the group as the design matures.

In response to a question, the team clarified that the station empties onto Boston Avenue and not College Avenue Bridge. The entrance is about 100-150 feet down from the corner of College Avenue. It was also noted there would be a bike cage for the station.

It was asked where the art for the station would go. GLXC stated that the art would be added to the station design rather than be embedded into the station design.

It was asked if the current design aesthetic of the station shown in the renderings is what should be embraced. The project team said yes.

It was asked if the large sidewalk area shown in slide 11 is cantilevered over the tracks. The project clarified that the station is situated over the tracks and the sidewalk extends to the retaining wall and is not cantilevered.

It was inquired if the area showing benches in slide 11 is a waiting room. The project team confirmed the area could be utilized as a waiting area with seating.

It was noted by a member that no designs have been shown yet by Tufts of the new building they are planning.

In response to a question, the GLX team explained that Tufts' development is not integrating into the station design. The GLX team is meeting regularly with Tufts and the City to coordinate mutual plans.

It was asked if glass doors are shown in slide 11 or just an open entryway. The team explained that designs for the doorway still need to progress. Final design will feature some means of closing-off the entryway at night when the station closes.

A member requested a more accurate rendition of the station entrance showing detailed dimensions of the sidewalk width, bike lanes, and The Ride drop off area shown. The GLX team said they would have a more accurate site plan to share with the team soon.

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A member commented that there is a lot of interest in Union Square and was wondering when one can expect to see more information on the station design. GLXC explained the design is advancing as it relates to the station and it will be presented to the group at a future meeting. There are still ongoing conversations with Somerville and Union Square developer US2 concerning portions of the station that US2 will be providing. The US2 station elements are still in a rough form, but should be included in a future presentation.

One concern raised about Union Square Station is the distance people have to walk in order to exit the platform. It was suggested, to the extent possible, this distance be reduced.

Another member noted accessibility issues outside the scope of the station designs which highlight the importance of reducing distances that need to be traveled wherever possible.

GLXC said that perhaps at the next working group meeting a representative of the GLXC stations group could be present to answer questions about specific station design elements in more detail.

It was suggested there should be access through Ball Square for pedestrians (from Broadway to Boston Avenue). It was suggested that this could be done even during off hours instead of shuttering the station as a means of better pedestrian connectivity. The team said that the station design is still being developed. In the current design, there are two points of access being proposed for the Ball Square Station. The proposed main entrance is at the corner of Boston Ave. There is also a proposed stair/elevator connection from the platform to the Broadway Bridge. It was noted that leaving this connection open would not allow the station to be closed off at night which is the current policy for MBTA stations wherever possible.

It was asked if the next phase of MBTA Automated Fair Collection would be in place for when these stations opened. The MBTA responded that dates for implementation of the new fare system would be close from a calendar perspective but it is too early to tell. If needed, there could be an interim solution in place until service is ready. It was clarified that there would not be any fair gates on GLX stations.

It was asked if the Green Line or the Commuter Rail is closer to the Ball Square businesses. The project team said it the Green Line, being on the west/south side of the MBTA right-of-way is the closest.

A member also noted that access in and around Ball Square Station will also depend on what future development in the area. It was suggested that CWG be kept in the conversation about the designs and new egresses proposed by developers.

GLXC was asked what questions are most helpful to hear from the CWG from a design perspective. The project team said the types of comments and questions raised today were good feedback.

A question was raised as to how many bikes the College Avenue Station bike cage would allow. The project team said they would get that information.

It was noted that the sidewalk in slide 11 looks like 25 feet but in reality it was closer 10-12 feet.

Retaining Walls and Sound Walls

It was asked if the retaining wall shown in slide 12 was wood. GLXC clarified that it was concrete cribbing that was filled with soil and in some cases they are deteriorating and will need to be replaced.

Responding to a question, GLXC explained the construction elements of a soldier pile and lagging wall. It involves inserting a steel piles into drilled shafts filled with wet concrete. Lagging is then slid between the shafts offering a solid surface to backfill against.

A member requested more detail be presented on wall materials and aesthetics at a future design briefing.

A member asked if sound walls would be installed on the west side of corridor. The project team explained the only sound walls planned on the west side of the right-of-way are at Brickbottom. The rationale for sound walls is to mitigate the Commuter Rail track shift closer to sensitive receptors which happens primarily on the east side.

Asked about the sound walls along the Union Square branch, the project team identified one at Brickbottom and another at the Community Alternatives building.

A member commented it would be helpful to understand the exact criteria used to determine where sound walls are to be constructed so questions that inevitably arise can be answered definitively. The project team noted that the sound wall criteria is outlined in the environmental documents and that the team could extract that information and put it in a form to share with the CWG.

There was a question about when the Commuter Rail track will be moved near Granville Avenue and Newbern Avenue. The project team explained that a drainage system under the Broadway Bridge needed to be completed before that stretch of rail could be shifted.

It was asked what the diameter of the drainage pipe that was being put in. GLXC explained it was a 60-inch diameter at its widest point.

A member noted that they have already gotten questions about sound walls from neighbors between Lowell Station and Ball Square Station on Cedar Street and in the Magoun Square neighborhood, Maxwell's Green and Vernon Street areas.

It was agreed that more information will be available on sound walls in late 2018 and that information will be shared with the CWG and the public at the appropriate time.

Broadway Bridge Closure

The project was asked how much notice would be given before the bridge would be shut down. GLXC explained it would have a more precise timeframe on the construction schedule in the next month or so, but that adequate notice will be given in order for the public to prepare. GLXC plans to launch an extensive public information and awareness campaign in the month leading up to the actual closure.

When asked about the request for a waiver to shut down the Commuter Rail in winter, GLXC clarified that it estimates the bridge span can be removed during a weekend shutdown in early

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2019. The removal of the bridge abutments will take much longer but current plans do not involve significant interruption of rail service.

It was asked if the bridge removal would be 24-hour work or during 8-hour shifts. GLXC said ideally it would be 24 hours including weekends.

It was inquired if there would be alternate service during the weekend Commuter Rail shutdown. The team said it would most likely be similar to other shutdowns of commuter rail service which involves busing passengers to their destinations.

There was discussion by GLXC and members about the location of the old Broadway Bridge abutment in the corridor.

Somerville Alderman Niedergang raised two issues about traffic mitigation that the City of Medford had previously raised with hopes that the project could provide: local shuttle van service for pedestrians to get around the detour and more police details to assist with detours and enforcement of traffic rules. In response, the GLX team referred to what was stated by the MBTA in a recent news article (Medford Transcript) that shuttle service was not originally in the GLX project contract so it is not in the scope of funding of the GLX project. With regard to additional state or MBTA police providing more extensive details (at least initially), the project team said the MBTA would follow up with a response.

A member asked if there had been any discussion about finding another line of funding to have the pedestrian shuttles provided. Alderman Niedergang said that the City of Somerville is looking at it and that he would advocate for the city to pay it.

Railroad Ties

It was asked if all the railroad ties for the upcoming track shift have been installed, or if more (including the odor that accompanies them) will be coming. GLXC said the ties have been installed down to about Cross Street and more will be added south beyond Washington Street in a few weeks.

Washington Street Bridge Closure

GLXC noted that they recently came to an agreement with a property owner of a parking lot near the bridge which would allow them to shift the Commuter Rail in a way that they could construct the Washington Street bridge in 2 phases instead of 3.

A member asked when the project expected to have more information on the 2 closures of Washington Street. GLXC said ideally they would finish the work in one season but the contract allows for 2 shutdowns if needed and people should plan accordingly.

It was inquired if part of the Washington Street Bridge work would include improvements to the drainage. The project said yes.

Rodent Control

A member noted he had been hearing from neighbors who are having rat issues on Gilman Street, Richdale Avenue, and the side streets that dead-end to the railroad. He said he is encouraging people to call Somerville's 311 service to report issues so that the city can marshal resources in the area. The project team said it would reach out to its contractor, A-1, about targeting that area before the winter. The GLX team also said to forward any complaints to the project email so that they can be logged.

Erosion Control

There was a question from a member if netting was expected to be installed across the entire corridor for erosion control. GLXC said it depended on how steep the slopes are, and that another method used is a tackifier spray (similar to hydro seed) that has been successful. GLXC said they must meet certain erosion control standards.

A member mentioned that folks had reported a waterfall-like phenomenon off the end of Montrose Court into the corridor during the heavy rainfall that perhaps they were just now noticing because of the tree removal. GLXC said the cause was determined to be a drainage pipe and they took measures to address it.

Homans Building

It was mentioned by a member that they believed the lion head and structures were still wrapped up and sitting on the sidewalk behind the fence as of a few days ago. The project said they were working with the City to transfer possession of the artifacts.

Members applauded the successful work that was done for the removal of the lions head and fixtures as a great positive story for the project.

Demolition at Ball Square

There was a question as to the timing on the Ball Square demolitions. GLXC said they were planning on starting abatement work in late December.

It was asked by a member if Boston Avenue would need to be closed for the demolition. GLXC said they may need to take a lane for a brief period.

A member inquired if it was only 2 buildings being demolished. GLXC said there are 3 buildings, one being the smaller structure.

After the buildings are demolished, it was asked if the entire site would be needed for station area or if there were development possibilities. The GLX team said there would also be a traction power substation on the site and the MBTA would determine if future development opportunities are possible.

It was asked if there would be a bike cage at Ball Square Station as well. The GLX team said there would be.

Open Discussion

Detours

It was asked if the 80 Bus Route detour would be going down Harvard Street. The MBTA said the planned detour route is currently College Avenue to George Street, to Main Street, to Medford Street, to Magoun Square (no Harvard Street).

Gilman Square Traction Power Substation

One member said that some folks still are not happy with the location of the traction power substation and suggested that if it cannot be moved, to find ways to better integrate it into the neighborhood such as masking, art or plantings. The GLX team said they would present designs as soon as they had enough information.

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Public Meeting

It was asked if there was an upcoming December 5 public meeting planned. The GLX team said that the public meeting is planned to be held on December 5 at the auditorium at the Community School in East Somerville (50 Glen Street) from 6:30 PM – 8 PM. This will be up on website soon.

Track shift/tie drops

It was asked if the new tracks being laid to replace the moved Commuter Rail tracks were being incurred by the project or the MBTA. GLXC said these were part of their scope as temporary tracks for the Commuter Rail to allow for more room for construction. These tracks will eventually become Green Line tracks.

It was asked if there were going to be more tie drops, could neighbors get better advanced notice than last time (due to the odor). The GLX team said that there will be more tie drops and they will get the notice out as soon as they can.

GLX Community Working Group Meeting Minutes/Presentation

It was asked if there could be some improvement on the GLX Community Working Group meeting notes that get published, as members felt some of the information was being missed. The GLX Team said if members feel the team has missed anything, let them know and they will add their comments to the notes.

Events

A member mentioned that STEP will be having its annual table at the Union Square Farmers Market this Saturday as another option to talk about GLX and the Union Square Station design.

A member announced they are working to coordinate a neighborhood walk with the designers of the Central Hill project, similar to the one held earlier in the year with Gilman Square. He said he would invite designers from GLX to join. He was hopeful the project would participate and would coordinate details soon.

Next meeting November 6, 8:30 to 10:00 AM, at GLX Project Office at 200 Inner Belt Rd in Somerville.