

# Green Line Extension Project

## **GREEN LINE EXTENSION PROJECT**

### **August 7, 2018 COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEETING – SUMMARY MINUTES**

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

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: August 7, 2018; 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

#### ATTENDANCE:

CWG Members: Dylan Manley (East Somerville), Jim McGinnis (Union Square), Justin Moeling (Gilman Square), Brad Rawson (City of Somerville), Laurel Ruma (College Ave), Jim Silva (Medford Ball Square), Tegin Teich (City of Cambridge)

MassDOT/MBTA: John Dalton – MBTA GLX Program Manager, Terry McCarthy – MBTA Deputy Program Manager of Stakeholder Engagement, Melissa Dullea – MBTA Senior Director of Service Planning

GLX Constructors (GLXC): Hannah Brockhaus, Mike Ortler, Megan Jarrett, Randy McSherry, Jeff Wagner, Nate Cabral-Curtis

GLX Project Team: Randy Henke, Martin Nee

Other Attendees: Erica Mace (City of Somerville), Mark Niedergang (Somerville Ward 5 Alderman), Polly Pook (Brickbottom), Hoai Thuong Tran (Conservation Law Foundation), Steve Taylor (MottMac), Andrew Reker (City of Cambridge)

**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:

Terry McCarthy, MBTA Deputy Program Manager of Stakeholder Engagement, provided an overview of the meeting agenda, which included MBTA bus operations and service planning, Maintenance of Traffic and detours, and the management and tracking of comments received via phone and email.

- Recent outreach events included the public information meeting in July of 2018, a First Responders meeting, and flyering in advance of recent clearing and grubbing work. The project team partnered with the City of Somerville to staff a table at the ArtBeat Festival on Saturday, July 14 in Davis Square, and SomerStreets on Sunday, August 5 on Holland Street.

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- Hannah Brockhaus of Howard Stein Hudson is leading the regional outreach efforts, having experience in regional traffic diversion on other projects. The focus will be on the cities and towns, large employers, and regional transit authorities (RTAs) in Essex and Middlesex counties.
- The team is coordinating with the outreach team for the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge Project in order to appropriately notify as many people as possible. As part of this effort, Terry McCarthy will be meeting with MassDOT in regard to coordination between this and other major construction projects impacting the north shore, such as North Washington Street Bridge Replacement Project and the Encore Casino (opening in June 2019).
- Laurel Ruma (College Ave) asked if the outreach for the GLX Project would be comparable to that of the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge closure. The team responded that while this is a different category of roadway with different considerations, the team will be using a similar approach, targeting both regional traffic and local neighbors.
- Jim Silva (Medford Ball Square) asked if the team will be working with Waze and other GPS apps in order to mitigate navigational systems from cutting through local residential streets. The team, in coordination with MassDOT and local municipalities, will be working to feed information into Waze and GPS navigational systems such that local roads will be marked unavailable for cut-through traffic.
- Justin Moeling noted that the ongoing nature and media advisories related to the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge closure have led to some community members comparing that closure with the upcoming Broadway closure. Terry noted that Commonwealth Avenue Bridge project is connected to I-90, and this is one among many reasons that the two are not comparable in terms of scope of reconstruction.

### GLX MAINTENANCE OF TRAFFIC

Mike Ortler, a member of the GLX Project Team, then provided an overview of operations for the Broadway Bridge closure. The bridge will be demolished and replaced with wider spans to allow for the new Green Line tracks. Tetra Tech is responsible for designing the detours and the Maintenance of Traffic. The team has reviewed available counts for all modes and is in the process of updating as appropriate. Detour routes have been developed for vehicles as well as bikes and pedestrians. Signage plans will also account for an interior detour route, for drivers who have missed the detour in order to avoid circling through neighborhood streets. Additional signage will include VMS boards in coordination with MassDOT.

- Access to the adjoining buildings and Boston Avenue will remain open.
- There have been weekly Maintenance of Traffic coordination meetings with representatives from the Cities of Somerville and Medford. These meetings have produced the most efficient route for the Broadway Bridge detour. The current route is not the shortest route, but the team is trying to put traffic on roads that have similar traffic volume.
- Currently, it is expected that police details will be employed throughout the closure of Broadway Bridge. The project team is coordinating with the cities and police departments to develop a police detail plan.
- A significant outreach process, including lessons learned from recent bridge projects including Comm Ave Bridge, is underway, will ramp up as the closure becomes imminent, and will continue throughout the length of the closure.

Terry McCarthy, MBTA Deputy Program Manager of Stakeholder Engagement, thanked the Community Working Group members for their creative suggestions, and provided a summary of

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the GLX team's evaluations of stakeholder suggested proposals for an alternative to the pedestrian and bicycle detour.

- The team found that the current utility bridge does not have the capacity to withstand pedestrian traffic, and therefore structural improvements would require cost and schedule impacts. The utility bridge's close proximity to the work being done is also a safety issue. Because of these factors, the MBTA does not see this as a viable option.
- The option to use resident driveways between Boston Avenue and Cedar Street is also not a viable alternative for this project. The team would be forced to negotiate temporary easements on private properties, which has significant cost and schedule impacts.
- Creating an at-grade crossing at Granville Avenue is not a viable option because it also has significant cost and schedule impacts, including accounting for a 7' elevation change from Granville Street to the rail alignment. Providing ADA accessible crossing would require ramps that would remove parking space along Granville Avenue. Additional concerns include foundations and drainage for the Ball Square Station location, and FTA and MBTA unwillingness to provide new at-grade rail crossings due to public safety risk and overall systemwide policy.
- Many logistical questions were brought up, including limiting a crossing to daytime hours. The option to phase in the improvements during the closure was suggested in order to minimize schedule concerns. Terry McCarthy said that cost impacts would not be addressed by this idea, but it would be evaluated. but there would still be the 7' height difference and the issues with driveway access. Jim McGinnis suggested that this concern should have been raised earlier in the design process, although the GLX team noted that the primary goal was designing a constructible product.
- Maintaining access to local schools throughout construction was also suggested; the team and its municipal partners are aware of this concern and proactively working with local schools to prepare for this.

### MBTA BUS OPERATIONS AND SERVICE PLANNING

Melissa Dullea, MBTA Senior Director of Service Planning, explained that the detours have changed for the bus routes since the Community Working Group last met and since the Public Information Meeting. She walked the Group through the Broadway closure's bus diversion alternatives for the GLX project for Routes 80 and 89. She noted that the goal is to confirm detour routes by mid-September in order to account for timing and stop adjustments in the winter schedule.

- The MBTA had previously suggested that Rogers and Pearson be converted to a one-way couplet in order to avoid elimination of any existing stops. Based on feedback received since the public meeting, this has been adjusted to use Highland Road. Due to the width of the road, this would likely require removing parking on one side of the street. In order to provide increased accessibility for neighborhood residents and to mitigate bus travel down their streets, a temporary stop could be provided at Kiddur Street or Morrison Avenue.
- The more regional detour route, which temporarily eliminates stops on Broadway in order to avoid local streets, now uses College Avenue (rather than Harvard Street) based on feedback from the public meeting.
- The MBTA's goal is to serve the stops where people are using the bus without forcing them to transfer to an additional transit vehicle. Bus Operations is also evaluating a previous request to provide a free link over the bridge during construction.

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- Justin Moeling (Gilman Square) asked if the bus route could follow the current pedestrian detour. Brad Rawson (City of Somerville) said that the city is still tracking this and other options and further outreach needs to be done to create a final recommendation for the MBTA. To this end, a Somerville community meeting is being scheduled to discuss this issue more in depth for local residents.
- The issue of parking impacts was reintroduced, as well as free parking for residents during the construction season. Also, a concern over the removal of parking was raised since this tactic has historically sped up traffic in neighborhoods.

Alderman Niedergang (Somerville Ward 5) expressed concerns for the distance pedestrians would have to walk and suggested regular free of charge shuttle service in Somerville that could connect to the bus stops at Powderhouse Square, Broadway and Cedar Street. He advised MBTA Bus Operations to run tests on Cedar Street with trucks and buses after completion of the chicane construction. He suggested Willow Avenue as a less local alternate to Highland Road.

Megan Jarrett provided an overview of the process for responding to requests/comments via the email and hotline service – at this point over 100 inquiries have been logged, 72 of which have been closed. The goal of the hotline is that any incoming call will receive a call back within 24 hours, however most calls are followed up within 12 hours to record basic information. The outreach team delegates the request or concern, and to provide resolution may include a face-to-face meeting. The communication team meets weekly to address the open and closed calls. Some questions may remain open for long periods of time if they involve design questions.

### DISCUSSION:

Justin Moeling noted that there has been a positive response from the community regarding the outreach process. Laurel Ruma noted that the community does not understand that the Keolis Positive Train Control (PTC) project work and the GLX project are two separate jobs. She said that many complaints they have received relate to the PTC work, which has a significantly less responsive outreach process.

Terry McCarthy updated the room that the team would be looking to schedule the next public information meeting after September, and that any suggested dates can be sent to him via email. Laurel Ruma requested that it be held before the Broadway Bridge closure begins. A CWG member suggested that the team present sound wall locations at that meeting.

Next CWG meeting September 4, 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at GLX Project Office at 200 Inner Belt Rd in Somerville