

NOTES FROM STEP MEETING 22 June 2006

June 22, 2006, 7-9 PM

VNA Community Room, Lowell St. Somerville

Present: Ellin Reisner, Wig Zamore, Karen Molloy, Steve Mulder, Jim McGinnis, Kristie Chase, Lynn McWhood, Carl Sciortino, Michael Hegarty, Barbara Broussard, Jared Ingersoll, Lori Gardinier, Ken Krause, Doug Carr, Katjana Ballentine, Iliana Nilsson, Melissa Bennett, Bob Feigi, Rebecca Ricco

Notes written by Karen Molloy

1. Discussion of Current Green Line Extension issues in Cambridge, Medford and Somerville

Main focus of this monthly STEP meeting was to meet with Green Line Extension advocates in East Cambridge and Medford so we could share what's happening in each community related to the Green Line Extension needs/impacts. Goals were to understand the issues of each community and see where we can work together.

Medford

Mixed messages are in the press in Medford, "TOD is great", "Development ruins quality of life". In Medford the biggest challenge for Green Line advocates is in getting the City to be proactive. The recently formed Medford Green Line Neighborhood Alliance (MGLNA) meets monthly to strategize on building support. There are many misconceptions in Medford, including opposition from people who have never ridden a bus or subway in their life. The group has met with the City twice, and held a mini-charette in April to study the Medford Green Line corridor and sites of the proposed T stops. The session included discussion about parking, traffic access and other concerns, and came up with some recommendations. The group noted that it had learned a lot from STEP. *[Note, when possible, a member from MGLNA and STEP try to attend each group's monthly meeting.-km]*

Medford Green Line advocates are in favor of having the Green Line Extension terminus at Wild Oats at Rte 16, where it could connect with bus lines (much like Lechmere station). Many fear the terminus might turn out to be similar to the one at nearby Alewife station.

Tufts is very much interested in the Green Line extension, specifically in a stop at College Ave that would be a transit gateway/hub. (Right now they have the shuttles to Davis and Medford Sqs.) Tufts has held back from publicly supporting the Green Line, fearing Medford backlash. Tufts wants the T stop, but does not want it to be the terminus. The university will hold a design seminar involving graduate students in Sept to design the station.

East Cambridge

Spaulding and Slye met with the community in Feb. S&S has renewed interest in escalating the timetable of moving the Lechmere station due to their infrastructure build-out of the North Point project. This means that the new station will likely be finished before 2011. Due to budget constraints, design has the First St., Cambridge St., and McGrath Highway

interchange all at grade level. The entire North Point parcel will drain into the Lechmere Canal (thus contaminating it). The new structure being built on the site of the candy factory is proposed to have underground access. Spaulding and Slye has the support of the city and MBTA but without involvement of the community in decisions about the station and accessibility from East Cambridge.

The neighborhood is concerned about open space (open space formerly promised now will be retention basins), crossing McGrath Hwy, and parking. There is also concern about the poor Green Line service at Lechmere. Current service is not as frequent as it was before the temporary suspension in 2004. Only one line (E) travels all the way to Lechmere; in the past the C Line service also traveled to Lechmere. Additionally, afternoon service provided on the sole line is typically only single car trains.

Somerville

Ellin met recently with Peter Calcaterra, the Green Line Extension project manager at EOT. He is not yet aware of community concerns; for example he was unaware of the Community Path dependencies on the extension to Medford, unaware of the Rte 28 study, and was thinking that Union Sq could be served by the Fitchburg commuter line and bus rapid transit!

This shift of the project to oversight by EOT from the MBTA is a big change. (MBTA is no longer handling expansion projects.) The MBTA and MPO have had a process for managing expansion projects however, EOT does not. At the moment there is no process in place for the managing the Green Line extension. Wig reported that TROC wrote a letter to EOT on the Green Line Process.

Information about the Route 28 Study was presented. A meeting on the study was held in May and a follow-up meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 28th at Somerville City Hall.

A tour of the extension to Union Square led by Joe Cosgrove has been arranged for TROC. There are some additional spots for other attendees. (See details under #4)

2. Green Line update and next steps for getting the project going

David Jordan, (Senator Pat Jehlen's Chief of Staff) has set up a meeting with representatives from the Somerville, Cambridge, Medford Green line advocacy groups to discuss the Green Line with the legislative delegation. The meeting will be held next Thurs at June 29, 10AM, Room 511 at the State House. At the meeting will be Senators Pat Jehlen and Jarrett Barrios Representatives Carl Sciortino, Denise Provost, and Tim Toomey. Ellin requested that David also invite Rep. Jim Marzilli.

\$3.5 million has been earmarked for an environmental impact study (DEIR). No funding has been approved yet for design or construction.

Not much will happen until the DEP finalizes the SIP plan, which is supposed to be released "soon".

There was also discussion of the fact that the recommendations of the Transportation Finance

Commission are one year overdue and that they will now not release a report until after the election. This will only allow a few months to prepare financing for the MPO –RTP submission in March, 2007.

In order to fund design and construction a transportation bond bill that includes funding for the Green Line must be in place in the fall when new legislative session starts.

Discussion ensued about what we can do during this slow period. Suggestions included:

- Writing more letters to the MPO, DEP to keep the pressure on and show we have not gone away.
- Attend gubernatorial candidate forums and asks their stand on the Green Line. Extension (no candidate will take a stand against it of course, but it keeps the issue on the public radar, which is important with so many projects vying for the same funds)
- See if Tufts, MassInc, or SamrtGrowth Alliance would sponsor a gubernatorial candidate forum on transportation.
- Circulate a petition at ArtBeat of a letter to the DEP from citizens of Somerville, Medford and E. Cambridge.
- Consider having Representative Capuano who sits on the Congressional Transportation Committee push the state to move on the Green Line funding plan. (A draft of such a letter will be circulated to the attendees of the meeting to review.)

3. ArtBeat Preparation

ArtBeat will be held on 15 July (presumably 11am-6pm.) STEP plans to be at ArtBeat again this year, this time sharing a booth with Somerville Bicycle Committee. SCM and Livable Streets might join us as well, to make it an alternative-transportation booth.

- Ellin will replenish t-shirts, (we're all set on bumperstickers and buttons), coordinate with other groups exhibiting at the booth, and get photocopies of handouts.
- Karen will coordinate STEP's involvement at the table, update the STEP overview brochure, and create a new brochure culled from voluminous information Wig has researched and presented in the past couple of years about the health impacts caused by fine particulate vehicle pollution. Wig will provide the visuals.
- Steve will update the STEP timeline, format the bus survey for print (ArtBeat will be the official kickoff of STEP's bus survey), and will generously provide/set up the tent again this year.
- Jim will pursue getting temporary STEP tattoos.

Medford Green Line Neighborhood Alliance is interested in helping to staff the booth some of the day and field questions about what is happening in Medford related to the Green Line. Also, the E. Cambridge Planning Team was invited to participate.

4. Other

The MBTA Rider Oversight Committee (TROC) is conducting a tour of the Green Line extension route alternatives for the Union Square branch on Wednesday, June 28th, starting at 12 Noon in the MBTA parking lot across Msgr. O'Brien Highway from the current Lechmere Station. Not all TROC members can attend, so there are few slots open for interested participants.

East Broadway Main Streets is holding a kick-off event on Sat 24 June (rain date 8 July) from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

MAPC MetroFutures workshop is being held on Tuesday, June 27th (in Framingham) and on Wednesday, June 28th at Northeastern University, Curry Student Center from 5 to 9 PM. For information about the workshop and signing up, see <http://www.mapc.org>.

Union Square Farmer's Market is inviting non-profit community groups set up a table for \$30 for one day. The market is held Saturday from 9:00 to at least 1:00, until October 28 this year. Since STEP is currently developing materials for ArtBeat, this Union Sq. opportunity would offer nice follow-on presence in another part of the city. We could perhaps have a table once in Aug, Sept, and Oct. Jim will coordinate doing this.

The new I93 exhibit at the Somerville Museum could be an opportunity for STEP to explore doing a project with the high school student involved with this exhibit.

SmartGrowth Forum 13 July. (Info clearinghouse/umbrella of Somerville transportation, air quality, healthy living, pedestrian and bike advocacy groups and Livable Streets that share some common interests.,

A few weeks ago Karen and Ellin went out and photographed several outdoor MBTA stations (Bunker Hill and several Green Line stops on the Riverside line) with the goal of using these photos to inform discussions and charettes about what Green Line Extension T stops could be designed to look like in Somerville/Medford. Karen and Ellin each have a CD of the photos. Karen will burn a CD of the images for the Medford Green Line Alliance and can burn more as needed.

STEP was not granted the NE Grass Roots Grant we applied for with Livable Streets in the spring. Ellin was asked to complete a survey by the foundation and she said that it is possible that we could get funding for organizing efforts in the future.