

## **Beyond Lechmere Northwest Corridor Project Project History**

Improvements to transit service in the study area have been the subject of several studies over the past 40 years. A brief summary of the studies that have been conducted and their findings follows.

One of the objectives of the 1962 *North Terminal Area Study* was to "design a new transit alignment to permit a future branch extension (of the Green Line) to Somerville and communities northwest along the right-of-way of the Boston and Maine Railroad".

The 1973 *Boston Transportation Planning Review Northwest Study* focused on this issue by identifying and evaluating various bus, commuter rail, and Green Line extension alternatives in the "Somerville Radial Corridor".

In 1980, the MBTA initiated an extensive study of improvements to the Green Line Northwest Corridor. The study had three components:

1. *Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for a relocated Green Line facility at North Station*
2. *Environmental Impact Assessment for a relocated Lechmere Station*
3. *An Evaluation of Transit Alternatives Beyond Lechmere Station. Green Line Northwest Project (1981)*

In 1981, the MBTA conducted *An Evaluation of Transit Alternatives Beyond Lechmere Station, Green Line Northwest Project* and, in 1984 the *Beyond Lechmere Alternatives Evaluation Report* provided an update to the 1981 study. Both studies assessed ten major options and six suboptions for MBTA transit service improvements north of Boston in East Cambridge, Somerville and West Medford/Medford Hillside. Alternatives that were analyzed included a No-Build Alternative, four separate alignments for a Green Line extension, a Green Line circumferential alignment, two exclusive busway alignments, two combination Green Line/busway alignments, and an alternative involving low-cost bus operational improvements. The studies concluded the following:

- Busway options:
  - Improve transit service levels while reducing operating costs.
  - New ridership on the busway is lower than on the Green Line options.
  - Low to moderate potential for attracting transit-sensitive economic development with the busway options.
- Green Line Extension options:
  - Significantly more costly than other options
  - Improve transit service levels
  - Have an increase in ridership
  - Greater impact on the development of residential, office, retail and other transit-sensitive commercial activities than the busway options
- Bus improvements:
  - Minimal impact on transit service levels, ridership and economic development.

- Although ridership will slightly increase, the primary benefits of improved transit services will be: significant improvements in the level of transit service for existing transit users; fare equity for existing MBTA riders; and an enhancement of economic development within the corridor.
- Six alternatives are recommended for further refinement and analysis:
  - Alternative 1: No-Build - no capital costs
  - Alternative 2b: A 3-mile Green Line Extension on the New Hampshire Division between relocated Lechmere Station and Tufts/Ball Square
  - Alternative 4: A 1.3-mile Green Line Extension on the Fitchburg Division between a relocated Lechmere Station and Brick Bottom/Union Square
  - Alternative 8a: A 4.0-mile busway on the New Hampshire Division between a relocated Lechmere Station and Tufts/Ball Square including a 1.0 mile spur to Davis Square
  - Alternative 8b - A 1.3-mile Green Line Extension on the New Hampshire Division between a relocated Lechmere Station and Washington Street/Cobble Hill with a 2.7-mile busway along the New Hampshire Division from the new Green Line terminus to Tufts/Ball Square including a 1.0 mile spur to Davis Square
  - Various low-cost bus operational or TSM improvements - little capital costs
- Recommended next steps are to complete an Alternatives Analysis/Preferred Alternative Report, then prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, if necessary.

In the late 1980s, the MBTA progressed the design of a relocated Lechmere Station to the eastside of Monsignor O'Brien Highway. This new station would have provided commuter parking as well as a storage facility for trolleys. This project was halted due to funding constraints. In 2000, the MBTA signed a public-private partnership agreement that provides for the relocation of Lechmere Station.

This current study to be undertaken by the MBTA has been initiated as a result of the findings of the 2000 EOTC/DEP Administrative Consent Order. Under this agreement, extension of Green Line service from Lechmere to West Medford is one of the transit improvements to be analyzed. The project is also included in the MBTA's Program for Mass Transportation and is rated a medium priority based on preliminary evaluation. In the Administrative Consent Order, EOTC has committed that prior to December 31, 2011 that the extension will be construction and open to the public.

The Administrative Consent Order (ACO) does allow for substitute transit system improvement projects. However, to replace a project, EOTC must demonstrate to DEP that the project is infeasible due to associated adverse engineering, environmental or economic impacts. In the 2003 ACO Project Update and Project Schedule, EOTC explained that a Major Investment Study for this study will resolve issues of environmental impact, routing options, methods of construction and operational characteristics.